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(Hansard)**

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Lundi
30 avril 2018

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 30 April 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 30 avril 2018

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: On behalf of the great member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, I'd like to welcome these amazing community champions: Mary Durham, Bonnie Rowe, Mike Rowe, Dianne Beattie, Jim Ford, Councillor Mike Hentz, Yvonne Brooks, Marg Hulls and Elaine Brown.

Hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: I'm very happy to welcome to Queen's Park Bette Jean Crews from the Species at Risk Program Advisory Committee and Bert Miles from British Columbia. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to welcome to Queen's Park today, on behalf of Wallaceburg Area Wind Concerns, Mary Rosseel and Denise Shephard. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: In the members' east gallery this morning, I'd like to welcome two of my constituents, Barbara and James Kavanagh. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I wanted to welcome Margaret Benke from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you and welcome.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's a special day for me because Marian Redford from Chatham is here today, and Brock Redford, her son, who goes to McMaster with my daughter. She's a great friend of mine. It has taken seven years to organize this visit.

May I say one more thing, Speaker? She is the daughter of the late Lorne Henderson, who was an MPP and cabinet minister for over 20 years in the Bill Davis government and held the portfolio I currently hold. Welcome to Queen's Park. Her cousin is here too.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'd like to introduce the mother of one of my staff today, Bernadine Van Santen, to the Legislature. Welcome to the Legislature.

I have another, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to the Legislature today's page captain from my riding of Sudbury, William MacDonald. I also want to extend a warm welcome to his mother, sitting in the members' gallery, Samantha Baulch. Welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you and welcome.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I am delighted to make this introduction on behalf of my colleague the member from London—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: North Centre.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: —London North Centre. I'd like to welcome to the House today a young woman from London, Riley Jones. Riley has just completed her first year at Fanshawe College in London and is at the Legislature today for the first time, along with her mother, Kate. I am so very pleased to see young people, and especially young women, taking an active interest in our political process. I want to welcome Riley and Kate here on behalf of the member from London North Centre.

Hon. Laura Albanese: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park Brookhaven Public School, which is here visiting Queen's Park today together with their teacher. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. Glad you're with us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Acting Premier. For seven years, the government has been battling yet another business, Trillium Power, in court. Due to suspicious circumstances with the government files yet again, the OPP were called in to investigate. Yes, Speaker, this is the fifth OPP investigation of this Liberal government.

Today, we've learned that new evidence shows that the Liberal government destroyed documents relevant to the case. Mr. Speaker, was the destruction of the Trillium documents intentional, or did it happen when the Liberals wiped the gas plant evidence from their computers?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for the question. I think the member very much knows that we can't comment specifically on the lawsuit from Trillium Power as the matter is before the courts—or any matter, for that matter, that is before the courts.

With respect to record-keeping, we are committed to being an open, accountable and transparent government. We have taken action to strengthen the laws related to record-keeping and we have ensured that there are good policies in place for document retention and staff training. We have worked closely with the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Chief Privacy Officer and Archivist of Ontario to ensure that our policies are appropriate.

The decision to place a moratorium on offshore wind is one that our government still believes is correct. It's a decision that we will continue to make based on science and evidence. Ontario will take a cautious approach to offshore wind.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Acting Premier: With so many investigations and scandals going on that they can't talk about, it doesn't leave very much for the Liberals to actually be able to talk—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I've heard from both sides, and I will not waver from my resolve to have us complete a decorum-filled question period. I'm listening carefully.

Please finish your question.

1040

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you. As I said, there's very little left for the government to be able to comment on, but we'll try delving deeper into this.

A freedom-of-information request to the Premier's office and Cabinet Office turned up no results. All records pertaining to "Trillium" and key offshore wind contracts between January 2010 and December 2011 were requested. The requests turned up zero relevant documents—zero, as in none, no documents. It's inconceivable that no one in the Premier's office or Cabinet Office wouldn't have used those words.

This is exactly what happened in the gas plant scandal hearings. The government said they had no files because they had destroyed them all.

Speaker, which Liberal ordered the documents related to this case to be deleted?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I want to remind the member opposite that we take our obligations in terms of transparency, accountability and openness of government very, very seriously. We promised the people of Ontario to open up the government completely, and we have done so to an unprecedented degree. In the report that was delivered by the then Information and Privacy Commissioner, she credited our government for improving record-keeping across the government.

We have sent a directive to all political staff. We have developed mandatory training programs. We have appointed chiefs of staff accountable for record-keeping. We have improved archiving requirements. We also brought in an accountability act that would prohibit the wilful deletion of records and in fact has created a penalty to do so. And the Premier's office has worked very closely with the Integrity Commissioner and the Information and Privacy Commissioner to deal with these types of issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Acting Premier: The Liberals say one thing when the exact opposite is true.

Trillium Power submitted another freedom-of-information request to the Minister of Energy. It was for a period from October 6, 2006, to January 31, 2014. They

requested documents with the keywords, "Trillium Power wind" and "TPW1 project in eastern Ontario." The response only included documents after March 2013. There were no documents for the FOI. It would appear that the Liberals have deleted every document that pertains to Trillium before March 2013.

We know emails exist because Trillium themselves had sent emails to the Premier's office and to the government's office, and yet they say none exist.

Mr. Speaker, where are all the documents?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to remind the member again that this Legislature is not the place to litigate matters that are before the courts. I know the members opposite would love to do that, and they've tried it many times. That does not make it right. Speaker, there's a very clear rule in this House, the rule around sub judice, as you know, which says that, as legislators, we must respect the independence of our judiciary and we must respect the process that is ongoing.

However, I can speak to the very strong action that our government has taken in order to ensure that we have an open government, that we have a government that really has bolstered and strengthened transparency and accountability. In my previous answers, I spoke of very specific measures that we have taken to do so—not only making sure that we have strengthened the law and put penalties in place for such actions; we also have gone beyond in putting the right set of policies and training that goes along with it for our staff so that government remains open and accountable to the people of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Acting Premier.

Speaker, Trillium can't get the evidence from the Liberals. It has been destroyed. But on this side, we've proven that we know how to get that evidence.

According to reports, Trillium says emails provided show that the Premier's office and "several other ministries" are involved. "The ministries of energy, environment and natural resources" collaborated behind the scenes to develop a policy specifically targeting Trillium. They say they intentionally favoured Trillium's competitor.

Did the Liberals delete all the documents because the evidence supported Trillium's allegations?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Like the Attorney General said, we can't comment specifically on the lawsuit from Trillium Power. As you know, Mr. Speaker, and this House knows, the matter is before the courts.

With respect to record-keeping, we're committed to making sure that we are transparent, accountable, and an open government, Mr. Speaker. As was said, we've taken action to strengthen the laws related to record-keeping and have ensured there are good policies in place for document retention and staff training. That's an important piece in that. We've worked closely with the

Information and Privacy Commissioner and with the Chief Privacy Officer and Archivist of Ontario to ensure that our policies are appropriate.

When it comes to placing a moratorium on offshore wind, it's one that our government still believes is correct, Mr. Speaker, and I'll have more on that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Acting Premier: Well, this is exactly how the gas plant scandal played out, and it ended with a Liberal conviction. The government denies that the deleted document claims are related to the gas plant deletions. They say that "any investigation into the destruction of evidence in the gas plant scandal is irrelevant to Trillium's case."

If it is irrelevant to Trillium's case, that means a separate order was given to destroy documents. So, Mr. Speaker, if it is irrelevant to the gas plant scandal, who ordered these documents to be destroyed?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Again, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows well that we can't comment specifically on the lawsuit from Trillium Power. The matter is before the courts. That's where it should be and that's why, again, we all know that we can't comment specifically on this lawsuit.

Mr. Speaker, we've talked about the actions that we've taken when it comes to ensuring record retention and document retention. One of the things that we've done is, when we've worked with the Information and Privacy Commissioner—she has credited our government for improving record-keeping across government. Some of the things that we've done as a government since we've worked with the Information and Privacy Commissioner are that we sent a directive to all political staff outlining and developing mandatory training programs, and we also appointed chiefs of staff accountable for record-keeping and improving archiving requirements. Those are just a few of the many things that we did to improve our retention of documents.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Acting Premier: Speaker, I can say that all of this sounds hauntingly familiar to the process that ended in a Liberal conviction. The deletion of documents was done a year after the Trillium lawsuit began. The government was being sued. They say that there are no emails, even though Trillium themselves sent emails to the government. Those at least should have come back in the documentation. But the Premier and the Premier's office and Cabinet Office were busy deleting documents. No wonder there have been five OPP investigations into this government.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Liberal government, the OPP have tremendous experience recovering deleted documents. What will they find this time?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to repeat to the member opposite that he and his party knows very well that you

cannot talk about litigation that is before the courts. That is inappropriate. The rules are very clear on that.

Speaker, as you know, in our parlance we call these pivot questions. They are pivoting away from talking about the kinds of cuts that they will bring under their party's agenda. We know that the Conservatives and their leader, Doug Ford, believe in nothing but cuts, cuts and cuts. They want to cut the minimum wage for hard-working people. They want to cut corporate taxes for large, wealthy businesses. But what they don't want to talk about is the cuts they will bring to our health care and our education services. How many jobs of teachers and nurses and personal support workers are they going to cut? That is the real issue. That's what they should be talking about, but they choose to pivot to something that is before the courts which they know very well cannot be spoken about in this House.

CANCER TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. A cancer diagnosis can be the scariest thing a family has to face. But there's good news: cancer treatments are improving all the time. There are treatments that once required going to the hospital that don't any longer, because of take-home cancer drugs. But in Ontario, these life-saving drugs often come with a huge out-of-pocket expense.

1050

Why does the Premier think it is okay to force cancer patients to reach deep into their pockets to pay thousands of dollars for these life-saving drugs?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Certainly, I'm pleased that our government and the third party seem to be very much on the same page when it comes to advocating for a universal, pan-Canadian pharmacare plan. My predecessor is heading up a Canada-wide committee looking at the issue of all drugs, including cancer drugs, and I'm pleased to see that the third party has recently—I think just this morning—had an initiative as it comes to take-home cancer drugs.

We are also, of course, very aware that this is an important area. That's why we in fact do provide free oral cancer drugs to take-home patients in a number of different ways.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Speaker, those different ways that the minister talks about: Most of them go through the Trillium Drug Program, but most of the time it takes weeks to get an approval.

Just imagine, Speaker: Waiting weeks for the government to decide, all the while knowing that your cancer is not being treated. Isn't that the last thing a family needs after a cancer diagnosis?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: There are many different ways, as I said, for low-income families to be able to access these drugs.

The Ontario Drug Benefit Program funds oral cancer drugs, including oral chemotherapy for ODB-eligible recipients. We have a new drug funding program administered by Cancer Care Ontario that funds intravenous cancer drugs that are provided in an outpatient setting. CCO also administers the Evidence Building Program and the case-by-case review program.

We currently spend some \$479 million on oral cancer drugs, and we increased our funding by 25% last year. I understand that the leader of the third party is now proposing an increase of some 9%. In her estimation, she has offered to spend some \$43 million annually on this program.

I'll have more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

M^{me} France G  linas: Speaker, the minister has to read this off a piece of paper because the system is so complicated.

The system is so demeaning to people that it puts people who are already at a very high level of stress through more stress. She doesn't have to force families to reach into their pockets for these drugs. The minister has a choice. She doesn't have to force them to wait for weeks for treatment. She doesn't have to force them to go through this demeaning process that she's laying out for us. She can provide true universal coverage for these life-saving cancer drugs. Why doesn't she?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: According to our estimates, the platform just released by the NDP would actually cost some \$300 million annually; they are only offering \$43 million. In other words, it's just like their long-term-care commitment: There's not nearly enough funding in their platform. Frankly, I don't know who could possibly trust them. I think it's particularly disappointing that they are so ready to make these empty promises to Ontario's cancer patients and their families.

We believe in real numbers. We analyze very, very carefully. And yes, we read them off a piece of paper to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question?

CANCER TREATMENT

M^{me} France G  linas: Ma question est pour la premi  re ministre. The Liberal government has had 15 years to give Ontario families facing cancer the universal drug coverage they need: 15 years, 15 budgets; 15 times that cancer patients have been disappointed by this Liberal government.

Why would the Premier force cancer patients to wait even 15 more minutes for the cancer treatments that they need now?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Certainly we do recognize that the cost of certain drugs can be challenging. That's why, in the last five years, we have added funding for an additional 68 cancer drugs. Just this last year alone, the

ministry spent \$467 million on oral cancer drugs for Ontarians. I reiterate: a 25% increase from the previous year. This is what we've been doing consistently.

We work closely with Cancer Care Ontario and rely on their advice as to which particular drugs should be funded. We rely on the Cancer Drug Implementation Advisory Committee to ensure that there is a high-quality cancer care system for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France G  linas: I'm asking about covering cancer drugs so that people don't have to reach into their pockets. Cancer touches so many families. So many families know what it's like to receive a cancer diagnosis. So many families know how scary this can be. But the government can help. We can make sure that life-saving drugs are covered so that these families can focus on treatment and recovery and not have to worry about how to pay for take-home cancer drugs.

Why won't the minister offer these families at least one comfort and make life-saving cancer drugs available to everyone?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course, this is why we've taken such massive strides towards our goal of national pharmacare through the creation and expansion of OHIP+. We have also recently, in the 2018 budget, suggested that we wish to invest \$800 million to create the Ontario drug and dental program to support those without an extended health plan. This will help low-income individuals with an opportunity for some funding that they can put towards cancer drugs.

In terms of the Trillium drug program, we have also made sure that we've streamlined the application process so that more people can access that type of help through that program.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

M^{me} France G  linas: If the Liberal government wanted to provide universal drug coverage, it had 15 years to do so. It hasn't. If the Premier wanted to provide universal drug coverage, she could have done so five years ago. She did not.

Why should cancer patients wait any longer for this Premier and for this minister to provide true universal coverage for take-home cancer drugs?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: On this side of the House, we're very conscious of affordability issues—obviously, those of our constituents, but also in terms of what is responsible in terms of budgetary increases in this important area. That's why we're working so hard with the federal government. We've been playing a pivotal role in the recent initiative between the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance and the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association. We are creating savings through these bulk-purchasing arrangements, and we have actually saved some \$3 billion for public drug plans through this initiative.

These types of savings will continue to be reinvested into funding new, innovative and life-saving drug therapies. We will continue to work with our provincial, territorial and federal partners to provide equitable and affordable drug coverage for all Canadians.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the Acting Premier. Ontarians were shocked to learn of new allegations of the Liberal government illegally destroying documents, this time relating to the Trillium power scandal. The OPP has been called in again. This is the fifth time that an investigation has been carried out into the actions of this government. The trial is set to begin on June 11, just four days after the upcoming election. It would seem the Liberals were maybe hoping that this story would stay out of the news until after Ontario votes.

Does the Acting Premier know when the Premier was made aware of allegations that the Liberal government again committed illegal document destruction?

1100

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I see a bit of consternation on his face, and I just warn the member to be very careful in making the kinds of allegations he's trying to make. This is not the place—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ahem.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's our collective responsibility to ensure that we abide by the rules and we respect the independence of the judiciary. This is not the place to litigate a matter that has been before the courts for some time. It's a complex piece of litigation that is working through; there is a date for the hearings to take place.

We, on this side of the House, respect that. I think the member opposite should do the same. I know he is a law-abiding citizen, Speaker, and I think we should be very careful and mindful around trying to insinuate the kind of allegations he was trying to do in his question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Our job in the official opposition is to hold this government to account, and that's what we do on a daily basis here. Yet this Liberal government continues to dodge and deny all they want. I think the first three things they learn when they come to office are control-alt-delete, because we have seen that time and time again over the last number of years.

It's the same Liberal government that once claimed the gas plants scandal was only going to cost \$40 million and that no crimes were committed there. We now know that the gas plants scandal cost \$1.1 billion, and a senior Liberal is going to jail as a result of that scandal.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to allegations of illegal document destruction, why should we believe the Liberals this time?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I fully recognize and appreciate that the role of the opposition is to hold government to account, and they should do so on policy issues. But that

does not give you carte blanche to talk and start litigating a matter that is before the courts.

If you want to talk policy, let's talk about policies. Let's talk about why the Conservatives, under the leadership of Doug Ford, want to cut the minimum wage for hard-working people. Speaker, let's talk about why they just want to give a big tax break for large, wealthy businesses and then lose all that important revenue that we get as government to provide essential services. Why? Because they're going to cut those services as well. They're going to undermine our education system. They're going to undermine our health care system, which is going to result in at least—one of the estimates around—a loss of 40,000 jobs. These are teachers we rely on, these are education workers we rely on and these are nurses and personal support workers we rely on.

So if they want to talk policy, let's talk about those important policies that are going to harm the province if they're in power.

CARDIAC CARE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is for the Minister of Health. Good morning, Minister.

More than 1,000 people in the Windsor area suffer a heart attack or have a cardiac event each year, but the Liberals only fund rehab programs for half that number. Instead of weeks, patients have to wait anywhere from three to six months to get into rehab.

Seeing the need, a new private cardiac rehab centre just opened up last week. They will take you right away, but you have to pay for it.

Why has this Liberal government paved the way for private health care by underfunding our health care system in the Windsor area?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We know how critical it is to have access to high-quality cardiovascular services in Ontario, including rehab services. Of course, we have been increasing our investment in this regard over the last several years. In fact, just this year, we are investing an additional \$25 million that will result in more than 3,000 new cardiac procedures. We know that rehab for a number of these individuals is extremely important.

We have, of course, increased our funding for in-hospital rehab across the board for all hospital funding to \$822 million, representing a major increase to the sector over the last year. We wish to deliver high-quality and specialized services, including rehab services, across the province, and I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The Canadian Health Coalition says private rehab clinics can prey on vulnerable patients who may not always know their rights. This American style of health care should have no place in Ontario.

Windsor's Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare gets 1,300 referrals a year for its Cardiac Wellness Program and is only funded for 500. How can the public have any faith in the Liberals at all when it comes to properly funding our public health care system in Ontario?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Since 2015, some six cross-provider teams have been piloting integrated, innovative models across the province for patients who require short-term care at home after leaving hospital for a variety of conditions. We're using these lessons learned from these pilots to inform the future of what the best practice in cardiac care is in Ontario.

Of course, for cardiac patients, rehab services are provided to hospital in-patients or outpatients, when they are needed, at no cost to the patient. We will continue to expand services in Windsor and across the province. Any medically necessary physician services to assess patients and treat cardiac risk factors are ensured services.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Labour. I'm proud to represent so many amazing women from my riding of Barrie. The women I represent work in all industries and sectors. They work hard for our community, and we are stronger because of their dedication.

However, there remain barriers that prevent their full participation in the workforce. Most notably, women continue to earn 30% less on average than men; that gap is larger for racialized women and even larger for women with disabilities. This is unacceptable. It is time to close the gender wage gap.

We know that increasing women's economic participation is the right thing to do for the sake of equality and for the good of our economy. Minister, what have you done to close the gender wage gap?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for Barrie, which is just north of the greenbelt from us here.

We've made investments in child care. We've made investments in health care. We've raised the minimum wage. We've brought in measures such as equal pay for work of equal value. But we know there's more to be done.

That's why we brought forward pay transparency legislation. We're the first province in all of Canada, Speaker, to introduce a comprehensive package of measures that's going to increase pay transparency. The legislation is a new tool in our tool kit. It's going to promote workplace equity. It's going to shine a light on pay inequity and on biases, and it's going to help employers to eliminate them.

In my mind, Speaker, this is one piece of legislation that should have passed in this House unanimously, so let me thank the NDP for their support on this historic legislation, but I'll tell you how deeply disappointed I am that Doug Ford and his Conservative Party turned his back on the women of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Minister. I too was disappointed about Doug Ford's Conservatives voting against the Pay Transparency Act, and so were the women in my community. The Conservatives chose to ignore the fact that a woman in Canada takes home only

70 cents for every dollar a man makes. They chose to put their business buddies ahead of the hard-working women in this province. This comes also after they voted against raising the minimum wage and increasing protections for vulnerable workers. It is not fair.

I'm proud that our government is working hard to create a better, fairer Ontario for all women and girls. I'm proud to support our upcoming budget that includes measures to improve women's economic stability, measures like restoring funding to the Pay Equity Commission after the Harris government slashed it in half.

Minister, can you tell us how our government is increasing women's economic participation?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you again to the member, whose riding is, as I said, just north of the great greenbelt that we have here in the province of Ontario.

Thanks to our leadership, Speaker, we have robust pay equity legislation, better Human Rights Code requirements to ensure employers can have differences in pay—

Hon. Jeff Leal: The greenbelt's gone. Sam, you'd better stand up for those croppers in Niagara.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I would like to hear the minister's response, from the government side.

Finish, please.

1110

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, we've improved our workplace laws. We've increased the minimum wage. I know that the opposition party wants to roll that back; we're increasing it to \$15 an hour—free prescriptions, free tuition for young people, and investing in women's equality.

Last week's vote was a tremendous opportunity for people to throw their weight behind these measures. Doug Ford's Conservatives made it very clear: Women's equality is not a priority for them.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Acting Premier. We already know that the Liberals have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on campaign-style announcements. Now the Toronto Star—Sun, I'm sorry; is reporting that the Premier's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Start the clock, please.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Now the Toronto Sun is reporting that the Premier's seven town halls cost taxpayers \$209,000. Campaigning on the taxpayer's dime has to stop. When will the Liberal Party pay back the taxpayer?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the member should be applauding the Premier for doing town halls across the province and listening to the people of Ontario. That's exactly what those town halls were.

It's not a very easy thing, as all members know, because we all have held town hall meetings in our com-

munities where you invite your constituents, where you invite—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the member to listen to the response, please.

Finish, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, the Premier held seven different town halls in all corners of the province to hear directly from voters about their concerns, their anxieties and their hopes for the future. This was all part of her effort to be open and transparent and to hear directly from voters in the lead-up to the budget—something that Premiers and leaders should do. Of course, there are costs associated with it, but it was open to all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: You are defending the indefensible. The government spending of tax dollars for partisan purposes is not limited to campaign-style announcements and town halls. For the Premier, it also includes over \$17.4 million that the government spent last year on partisan advertising. When Doug Ford campaigns, he doesn't send the bill to the taxpayers. When will the Liberals reimburse the taxpayers?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I am defending the Premier's right, as the leader of this province and of this government, to listen and talk to Ontarians. That is exactly what she is doing. Her job is to be out and about in communities and talking to Ontarians.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm trying. And I know you are.

Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I don't know why they're so worked up that the Premier was hosting town halls that were open to all Ontarians, where questions—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They were empty. Nobody went to them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, as the MPP from Hastings himself said, this is how an MPP, for example, gets the pulse on what the community is thinking on a number of different issues: by hosting town halls. I think it's a good idea that politicians should be finding out the pulse of our local communities, and that's exactly what the Premier was doing.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Acting Premier. For months, farmers and residents in north Kent have complained about black well water, which started appearing after Samsung began pile-driving construction for its new private, for-profit wind farm. The Premier won't listen to these farmers and residents. She prefers to listen to Samsung, which insists that pile-driving cannot cause black well water. But earlier this month the Min-

istry of the Environment banned pile-driving construction for a new private wind farm in Chatham-Kent.

The ministry staff have acknowledged that pile-driving is a risk to groundwater in Chatham-Kent; why hasn't the Premier?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: To the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the minister responsible for small business on behalf of the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I appreciate the question from the member from Essex. Our government takes concerns regarding groundwater quality very seriously and has prioritized environmental protection as part of renewable project construction. That's why we've put strict requirements and processes in place on projects like this. It's our government that has created these requirements, with strict measures of oversight, in order to provide the highest level of protection for our environment.

If the developer does not follow these requirements or processes adequately, the project may not proceed. This is an issue that I know my colleague the Minister of Climate Change has been dealing with extensively.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Ministry staff have confirmed what farmers and residents of Chatham-Kent have known ever since their well water turned black: Pile-driving is putting their groundwater at risk.

The ministry has now banned pile-driving at a private wind farm in Chatham-Kent, but this ban comes too late for farmers and residents in north Kent, where independent testing has shown a 14,000% increase in Kettle Point black shale particles, which are known to carry heavy metals such as mercury, arsenic and lead.

Will this government listen to north Kent farmers and residents, do the right thing and conduct a health hazard investigation today?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank my colleague from Essex for the supplementary question. I know the Minister of Climate Change has responded to this issue. I know he continues to have his ministry officials engaged in this particular issue. We all know, whether you're in Wawa or Windsor, Cobourg or Coboconk, we want to make sure the quality of water is the purest water we can for every resident in the province of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Acting Premier. This government has spent almost \$23 billion of taxpayers' money on business support programs over the last five years. We already know that most of the grants go to the oldest, wealthiest corporations, with 80% of the money being handed out by invitation only.

This morning, a new report was released by the Financial Accountability Office which examined 12 of these programs. Shockingly, the FAO found no evidence to show that any of these programs produce actual results.

Mr. Speaker, how can the Liberal government spend billions and billions of dollars with no evidence that taxpayers are getting value for money?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: To the Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member for his question, and I want to go beyond that to thank the FAO for the report that came out a little bit earlier today.

The member asking the question talks about the evidence that demonstrates that the plan that our government has embarked on over the last number of years with respect to strategic supports for business—what's the evidence that it's actually working?

I would simply point to the fact that Ontario's economy is stronger today than it has been at any time in recent memory. We know, and the members in the Conservative Party know, that since the depths of the economic recession we've created more than 800,000 jobs. We know, for example, that our unemployment rate is lower today than at any other time in the last 17 years. We know we've been below the national average as it relates to unemployment now for almost three consecutive years, and we know that the province of Ontario's GDP is outpacing not only the rest of the country but the entire G7.

I would suggest to the member asking the question that we thank the FAO for his report. The evidence is in how lives across Ontario have improved because of our investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the minister: In 2012, the Drummond report identified approximately 50 business support programs in Ontario. Today, there are over 100 such programs on the books. Of the 12 the FAO examined, only three collected performance measures and only five had any targets or benchmarks.

Minister, you're handing out \$5 billion every single year. This government doesn't seem to know what programs are running or what, if anything, they're actually accomplishing. Minister, is this just another Liberal slush fund?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I don't want to repeat what I said in the opening answer to the first question, but again, every single economic indicator, whether we're talking about unemployment, whether we're talking about GDP, whether we're talking about how consistently the statistics point to the fact that lives have improved and that our economy has gotten stronger—all of that evidence is clearly there.

The member opposite has heard me answer multiple questions on this topic in my time in this particular portfolio, Speaker, but I would also point out that when we talk about how strong the economy is, it also means that the lives of people across the province of Ontario are getting better because of the economic prosperity. The jobs that we're creating via our strategic investments are helping to improve lives in every corner of Ontario.

1120

Specifically—because I know this member has talked about some of our regional investments—I want to point

out that the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund invested, in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, \$3.5 million to help create and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ACCÈS AUX SOINS DE SANTÉ

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

M. Gilles Bisson: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé. Madame la Ministre, comme vous le savez, la communauté francophone travaille très fort avec vous, avec moi, votre ministère, le RLISS et autres pour finalement mettre en place un centre de santé communautaire à Timmins. Ça fait 28 ans qu'on essaie de mettre ce centre-là en place. C'est la plus grande communauté francophone qui n'a pas un centre de santé communautaire.

On sait qu'on a votre appui. On sait que vous avez travaillé étroitement avec la communauté, avec l'agence et avec moi-même. On attend la nouvelle. On s'est fait dire que la lettre était signée, mais la lettre n'était pas envoyée ou n'était pas reçue : lequel? On va avoir cette nouvelle-là tantôt?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I think the member knows that we have been working very, very hard on this particular initiative. Our government truly values the work of community health centres, when you have inter-professional teams working together.

On this specific initiative for the francophone community in Timmins, we're well aware of the need for that particular community health centre to be appropriately funded. I would just ask the member opposite to stay tuned. I believe that he will hear some news in this regard in the very near future.

We do understand how important it is to access primary care where you have the ability to speak in, obviously, one of our two official languages. This is why we are committed to community health centres across the province. The member will be hearing very, very soon as it relates to Timmins.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This completes the journey that Timmins has gone through in being able to serve people when it comes to health centres. We first funded the Misiway health centre that serves our First Nations brothers and sisters in the community. We then got two family health teams, one in South Porcupine, one in Timmins. But what has always been missing is the francophone component so that we're able to better serve the community.

We've been working on this hard, and we are awaiting the final letter to be delivered. Can you please give me the letter, and then I will deliver it myself?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Our government is absolutely committed to improving access to high-quality French-language health services across the province. The passage of the Patients First Act in 2016 did provide a solid framework for renewed partnership and brings

increased focus on enhancing equity, and in fact, the Minister of Francophone Affairs is constantly reminding me of the particular importance when it comes to health care.

Just to speak a little bit about the interprofessional care teams that we currently have in the province: We have some 294 of these serving some four million people. Obviously, we want to expand this type of care. It's extremely valuable to ensure that people not only have access to the language that they're comfortable in, but also to the excellent health care that they truly deserve.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We all have a collective responsibility to support our seniors and to ensure the best quality of life. That is why our government has almost doubled funding for long-term care since 2003. We know that we have a growing and aging population in Ontario and across Canada, which is why our government is making critical investments in elder care. Our 2018 budget proposes an additional \$650 million in home care over the next three years and the expansion of OHIP+, which will provide free prescription drugs to seniors over 65. In the fall, we also introduced Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors.

Can the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care please inform this House of the investments that our government is making to support the needs of seniors in our communities and of caregivers who often work with those seniors?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member from St. Catharines, who is obviously a great advocate for seniors in his community, for giving me the opportunity to discuss our government's plan.

Last fall, our government committed to 5,000 new long-term-care beds by 2022 and more than 30,000 new beds over the next decade. We accepted numerous proposals from communities across the province. We consulted with the LHINs in each of the 14 areas across the province, and we're now allocating 5,000 beds. These include nearly 500 new beds for indigenous communities and over 1,500 new beds for specific cultures, including—and I know the member from Timmins—James Bay will be interested in this—francophone communities.

These investments will keep people out of hospital and help more people get the care they need at or close to home and in the community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. James J. Bradley: I know the constituents in the city of St. Catharines will greatly benefit from these new beds. I was pleased, by the way, to have 96 new beds announced in my riding, to make that announcement in the city of St. Catharines—13 new beds for regional municipality of Niagara homes, 81 at Pleasant Manor in Virgil and 66 new beds in Welland.

All of our constituents will benefit from these investments in care. Our home care investment includes \$180 million this year alone to provide 2.8 million more hours of personal support, including caregiver respite, as well as 284,000 more nursing visits and 58,000 more therapy visits.

Our budget will provide \$300 million over three years to increase staffing in long-term-care homes. That means every long-term-care home in the province will benefit.

Speaker, can the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care please share more of the details about the supports for seniors?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you again to the member for that question. Not only are we building 30,000 additional new long-term-care beds, but we're also redeveloping every older long-term-care home by 2025. We've already redeveloped some 13,500 beds, and we know how critical this is to the sector.

We're glad that both parties have endorsed our plan to create 30,000 new long-term-care beds. We have yet to see any costing to accompany the PCs' commitment and how this would fit into Doug Ford's promise to make billions of dollars' worth of cuts—unexplained—cuts that would have to come directly from front-line services in our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we're continuing to choose care over cuts.

RABIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. This Liberal government has outdone itself yet again. As reported in last week's Ontario Farmer, a Ministry of Health-amended rabies regulation is going to affect generations of tradition and the celebration of the best of the best when it comes to exhibiting animals at local fairs, petting zoos and riding stables.

For goodness' sake, there are already federal rules that have banned the exhibition of contaminated animals, which I will send over to the minister for her information.

Speaker, I have to ask: Why did this minister not insist on proper consultation with all of the players impacted by this amended regulation?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'd be happy to obviously learn a little bit more about this particular initiative. I'm surprised that the member opposite didn't approach me, or through our MPP liaison, which is the usual protocol in these cases.

I will certainly look into the matter and consult with the appropriate officials just to find out a little bit more about the member's concerns and what exactly she is concerned about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Well, here's some information. Huron county 4-H leader Darrell Bergsma said that this heavy-handed approach will have a huge negative impact on local fairs. Keith Currie of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture commented, saying that the 14-

day consultation period was “not sufficient to allow for a proper investigation.”

In this question period, I have to ask the minister to do the honourable thing and suspend this amended regulation until proper consultation has been facilitated.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Having a little bit more information now is helpful. I'll certainly take the issue under advisement and look into it very, very thoroughly. Thank you.

1130

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Education. Last week, I asked the minister about the need for an equivalent francophone high school in east Toronto. Without reiterating her claims that she is supporting both French and English boards, without simply stating that she has allocated funds to the Conseil scolaire Viamonde for a French high school in the east end at Greenwood and without passing off the responsibility to the school boards, when will the minister finally step up to her obligation to ensure that these children's charter rights are respected and that equivalency is provided?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I want to thank the member opposite for this question. Our government is absolutely committed to supporting both French and English school boards across the province to build better schools to ensure all students have safe and healthy environments in which to learn.

Since 2003, we have actually provided \$208 million in capital funding to CS Viamonde. In this time, CS Viamonde has completed 25 projects, including eight new schools and 17 additions.

We recently announced that this year we are providing \$80 million to support nine capital projects for French-language boards, more than \$16 million to be invested in the Viamonde school board to support the creation of a new French high school in Toronto. This school will become the fourth public French-language school in Toronto. Locally elected trustees are responsible for deciding the most appropriate pupil accommodation arrangements for schools of the board, including the location of the new French high school in Toronto's east end.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the minister: Jérémie is a young francophone student whose passion is soccer. The Greenwood site chosen by the Conseil scolaire Viamonde does not have a schoolyard, and the TDSB states that, “The Greenwood site is not an ideal property for an operating school because it does not have its own sports field.” Jérémie and other young students who want to be part of the sports world will go to better-equipped English schools before they give up sports.

What steps will the minister take to ensure that the francophone community in the east end of Toronto has access to a quality sports field for a French high school?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I just want to be clear that we are absolutely making investments

when it comes to French-language schools in the province. In fact, that's what I was trying to point out.

One of the things I also want to point out is that enrolment is absolutely increasing. In 2016-17, over 105,000 students were attending French-language schools—an increase of 13% since 1998. Test scores are rising in French-language schools. For grade 6 tests, over 81% of students have consistently met or surpassed the provincial standard in reading, writing and math. Over the past five years, 80% of students in French-language schools have consistently met or surpassed the provincial standard in EQAO. They are consistently achieving high results in the grade 10 literacy test.

All this to say, Mr. Speaker, that really enrolment is increasing, the achievement is there and our investments are increasing, so I don't really understand what the member opposite is asking about.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Growth. Our government has put a priority on building a strong relationship with our American partners. That's because we know that free trade creates good jobs for workers in both Ontario and the United States.

Ontario is a top customer of 28 states. In 2017, two-way trade between Ontario and the US totalled nearly \$400 billion. Premier Wynne and our entire government has been actively engaging with American decision-makers, and the Premier has met with nearly 40 state governors. Last week, the Premier was in Detroit to meet with the governor of Michigan, Rick Snyder, and signed a memorandum of understanding between Ontario and Michigan.

Minister, can you please share more details about this agreement with one of our most important trading partners?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member from Kingston and the Islands for her very important question. I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak about how our government has consistently stood up for Ontario workers and for Ontario businesses. I also want to comment on the mature and thoughtful partnerships that we've built up over time with our US state leaders.

Together, Ontario and, specifically, Michigan account for nearly a quarter of North American vehicle production. Our collaboration through two previous MOUs has led to the first cross-border automated vehicle test in North America.

Ontario and Michigan are vital trading partners. Quite simply, we build great things together. Through this latest MOU, we look forward to continuing to work closely to grow our bilateral trade and identify shared export opportunities. We are also committed to working together to expand on trade opportunities, improve our transportation corridors, and protect and restore the vital Great Lakes ecosystem.

I want to thank the Premier and the entire team for their hard work, because we're seeing—I'll tell you more in the second answer, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm glad you will. Supplementary.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Minister, for your answer.

Our Premier has a track record of meeting with state governors and advocating for Ontario's interests—over 40 governors in all. That's impressive. This MOU with Michigan is only the latest of many achievements in this regard. A month ago, Ontario signed a memorandum of understanding with Indiana to continue building on our strong partnership with them.

But leadership and co-operation sometimes mean knowing when to forcefully and respectfully disagree. When push comes to shove, our Premier will always stand up for Ontario workers and businesses. Our government introduced the Fairness in Procurement Act to respond to Buy American legislation in New York state. Our Premier stood side by side with the steel industry and its workers when the US administration threatened to impose tariffs on our exports. Minister, can you reassure this House that our government will continue to stand up for Ontario workers and businesses?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for her follow-up question.

Mr. Speaker, our government has always and will always stand up for our workers and our businesses here in Ontario. We believe that free trade benefits our economy on both sides of the border, but free trade must also be fair trade. When that's threatened, our Premier and our government have stood up and will continue to stand up and fight for our workers.

Let me remind this House that when US states introduced protectionist Buy American legislation and when the US administration threatened to harm our steelworkers, the silence from the opposition, particularly the Conservatives, was deafening. When we stood up, they said, "Stand down," and that's absurd. Workers know they cannot depend on Doug Ford and Ontario's Conservatives to fight for their interests. They know that only one party has shown that it's willing to stand up for Ontario, stand up for our workers, stand up for our companies and stand up for our greenbelt, Speaker, and that's Ontario's Liberals.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, as you know, for a great number of years, since the Liberals have been in office, my riding has been fighting for the redevelopment of two hospitals, the Collingwood General and Marine Hospital and Stevenson Memorial Hospital in Alliston. Your predecessor quite nicely gave us a bit of money for the planning process just about a month ago—\$500,000 for each hospital—but as you know, each hospital has spent well over \$1 million of their own money, front-line

patient money, to go through the planning process. We don't have approval yet. I was just wondering if over the last month there has been a change of heart at the ministry and you might see your way to approving these projects before the writ is dropped.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course, it is our goal to ensure that Ontarians have the health care that they need where they need it, and we have been working very, very hard in this regard over the last number of years.

Of course, as the member knows, we are always consulting with our LHINs to find out exactly where the need is greatest and proceed with the planning process in an orderly fashion. Obviously, due process is extremely important to ensure that all the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed, so we are working in that regard.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm just waiting for the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex to finish. Thank you.

Supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister: Minister, we've been waiting a lot of years and we've spent a lot of money. Both our LHINs agree that these projects need to go forward. Even without the go-ahead from your government, both communities have pretty much raised their community share. So we're doing our part, and we need the government to do your part.

After all, I think everyone would be very happy, including the Liberal candidate in my riding for this election, who is the Premier's son-in-law. Maybe if you want to keep your job over the next couple of weeks, you would announce these couple of hospitals.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: As I've said before, we know that infrastructure is absolutely vital to provide high-quality health care in our communities. We've been investing very heavily in that infrastructure to provide these types of facilities. Certainly I would like to commend the community for their part, as related by the member for Simcoe-Grey, in terms of the fundraising that they've been able to achieve. This is obviously good news, and I'm sure we will yet again look into the matter.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank the member for going easy on me today. That was really good. I appreciate that.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: What? I tried.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, I know you did.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do beg to inform the House that the following documents were tabled:

—a report entitled Lottery and Gaming, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario; and

—a report entitled Business Support Programs, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to welcome a little later this afternoon to this House my former boss and former Speaker of the House of Commons, Peter Milliken. I extend a warm welcome to him when he arrives.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I have a few constituents here—also some from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. I missed them earlier this morning because I was making an announcement elsewhere.

I'd like to welcome Bonnie Rowe, Yvonne Brooks and Elaine Brown, members of the Dutton Dunwich Opponents of Wind Turbines executive; Mike Rowe; Dianne Beattie; Jim Ford; Councillor Mike Hentz from Dutton Dunwich; Marg Hulls; Mary Durham; and from Monte's riding, Mary Rosseel and Denise Shephard.

On behalf of Monte and I, welcome and thank you for being here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That would be the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex; is that right, member from Elgin—Middlesex—London?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to correct my record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So done.

It's time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I rise today to bring attention to the wind turbine project in the municipality of Dutton Dunwich, which is located in my riding.

As this government is well aware, the municipality of Dutton Dunwich conducted a survey of residents before declaring themselves a non-willing host, with 84% of the community against the wind turbines. This survey and report was shared with the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. Unfortunately, the government chose to ignore the people of Dutton Dunwich and moved forward with the project.

Later this afternoon, I'll be bringing forward a petition, on behalf of the residents, calling on the government to make it mandatory that all renewable energy developers use the new noise modelling guidelines.

On January 23, 2018, the Dutton Dunwich Opponents of Wind Turbines filed a notice of application for a judicial review in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. The application declares that the transition provisions should not be used in the five large renewable procurement wind turbine projects, which include the Dutton Dunwich Strong Breeze; two in Chatham-Kent, the Romney near Lakeshore and Otter Creek near Wallaceburg; and two in eastern Ontario, Eastern Fields in the municipality of the Nation, and Nation Rise in the municipality of North Stormont.

I'm calling on this government to take the concerns of Dutton Dunwich residents and the communities in the province and signatories on this petition seriously and

stop the project at Dutton Dunwich, or at least put it on hold until all the concerns are addressed.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This Saturday, April 28, I attended an event in London to recognize the day of mourning and injured workers. I was honoured to attend the London Steps for Life—Walking for Families of Workplace Tragedy. Funds raised from this walk help provide support services to families who have been affected by workplace tragedies and raise awareness about injury prevention.

Threads of Life is a national, not-for-profit charitable organization dedicated to supporting families, along their journey of healing, who have suffered from a workplace fatality, life-altering injury or occupational disease. They bring awareness to the event every year and believe that injuries in the workplace are predictable and preventable, and through Steps for Life they spread this important message.

There were 40 events taking place across Canada, with more than 4,000 families, corporate teams and partners participating. The community came together to mourn and honour all those who have been injured, afflicted with an occupational illness, and those who have lost their lives while working.

This day of recognition provides each of us with the opportunity to stand side by side as workers across Ontario, to renew and inspire our commitment to improving the health and safety of everyone in the workplace.

In 2016, the greatest number of workplace deaths in the country was in Ontario. That is simply deplorable.

We all have a part to play. Unions, management, employers, workers and government all need to work together to reduce workplace injuries and better support injured workers. We cannot forget the work that still needs to be done. The fight will only end when no worker has to risk his or her life on the job and all can go home to their families.

RANKIN CANCER RUN

Mr. James J. Bradley: Saturday, May 26, will see thousands of people gather at Grantham Lions Park in north St. Catharines for the annual Rankin Cancer Run, an event that has raised \$7.55 million over the past 12 years and has attracted as many as 13,000 participants for a single day.

Under the enthusiastic and capable leadership of run director Mary Ann Edwards and the sponsorship of generous businessman Tom Rankin and the Rankin family, this outstanding fundraising endeavour, which dedicates all of its proceeds to local health care facilities, has contributed \$3.5 million to the St. Catharines general hospital cancer centre; \$1.64 million to Wellspring Niagara; \$380,000 for Hospice Niagara; \$500,000 for West Lincoln Memorial Hospital; \$450,000 for the Greater Niagara General hospital; \$349,000 for the Douglas Memorial hospital; \$315,000 for Welland county general

hospital; \$240,000 for Port Colburne hospital; \$90,000 for the former Niagara-on-the-Lake Hospital, and funding will go to Hotel Dieu Shaver this year.

All people in Niagara are grateful to Mary Ann Edwards, Tom Rankin and the fabulous volunteer team for their tireless efforts and generosity, and to the walkers, runners and sponsors for their energetic participation.

VISION HEALTH MONTH

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise today to bring to the attention of the Legislature the upcoming Vision Health Month, which is celebrated across Canada during the month of May.

This is a time when we raise public awareness about the importance of protecting vision health and encourage Ontarians to have regular eye exams as they are the best form of early detection and prevention, improving the chances of detecting eye conditions early enough to help control and treat the disease.

There are an estimated 5.5 million Canadians living with an eye condition that could lead to vision loss. Age-related macular edema is the leading cause of vision loss in this country, affecting 1.4 million Canadians, and diabetic retinopathy is the major cause of vision loss in working-age adults, affecting 500,000 Canadians.

Many blinding eye diseases that affect children still have no treatments; that's why the Foundation Fighting Blindness funds sight-saving research. But there are effective sight-saving treatments for both age-related macular edema and diabetes-related vision. Unfortunately, many Canadians are losing their sight to preventable forms of blindness, including right here in Ontario. This is simply unacceptable.

We commend the work of the Foundation Fighting Blindness and hope to work collaboratively to build the tools and frameworks that will ensure that Canadians are not going blind when they don't have to.

We also commend the work of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the CNIB, the Canadian Council of the Blind, CCB, the Ontario Association of Optometrists and all others who are raising awareness about eye health and help prevent avoidable sight loss across Ontario.

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Great Lakes are an incredible gift of nature to this province and to the people who live in the Great Lakes basin. Most of Ontario's population depends on those lakes; 40% of Canada's economy depends on the health of the Great Lakes. But there are incredible pressures to draw water out of the Great Lakes to areas that are not part of the basin. Recently, Racine, Wisconsin, put forward a proposal to draw seven million gallons a day for a new industrial project in one of their suburbs—seven million a day, Speaker.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association and others are calling for a review of this proposal, given that it sets a dangerous precedent. We have the power and

authority under the Great Lakes agreement that Ontario is a signatory to. Ontario needs to protect our Great Lakes and use its power to call for a full review.

The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry is the person responsible for speaking out, and in this statement I ask her to in fact take hold of this file and move on it. The project is one of many that will come in the future if we don't stand up. It's time for Ontario to protect the Great Lakes.

CANADIAN WOMEN FOR WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Last Friday I had the pleasure of attending the Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan annual fundraising gala in Kingston. CW4WA is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is for Canadians to take action in partnership with Afghan women towards improving education and conditions of human rights, ending women's oppression and providing opportunities for Afghan women to live their lives with dignity, certainty and purpose. Since 1998, they have raised \$8 million to support women and girls in Afghanistan.

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The theme for the gala this year was "From Kandahar to Canada: Roya's Story" and featured guest speaker from Afghanistan Roya Shams, as well as Michael Cooke, an editor of the Toronto Star, who took a very active role in bringing Roya to Canada for her education.

I want to thank Michael, and Lisa LaFlamme, in particular for her fireside-chat style interview with Roya. Her story was pin-dropping and so inspiring, but it also showed the many barriers that girls face in Afghanistan. Her path demonstrates just how valuable organizations like the CW4WA are for women both at home and abroad.

I want to give special thanks to the local chapter in Kingston, Madeleine Tarasick, Margaret Stewart and all of the Kingston chapter, including many of the retired teachers from the retired teachers' association for all of their hard work in bringing a better life to women and girls in Afghanistan.

Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

PHRAGMITES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Spring has at long last arrived. Lawns and trees are turning green, but unfortunately, the less-than-desirable species have also been revived. I would like to give the Legislature an update on the invasive species phragmites, or common reed.

Since being given a tour of a phragm-invested wetland in 2012 by the Lambton Shores Phragmites Community Group, I've been advocating to this government that action needs to be taken. Through statements, letters and questions, I've been telling the government about this very real threat to Ontario's wetlands, but despite increasing awareness, that threat is no less real today than it was six years ago. It is still spreading, and in every

corner of southern Ontario it has covered ditches and drains, rivers and streams.

At this stage, manual cutting and burning is unrealistic and inadequate. Herbicides have been used against phragmites for some time now across the United States and in several other Canadian provinces, but they're not allowed in Ontario. It took a long time, but the Ministry of Natural Resources is finally taking some small, experimental steps toward using such herbicides to control the spread. Unfortunately, the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change has been blocking the approval of any of the safe glyphosate herbicides for use over water.

I urge the ministers of this government to take this threat seriously and to work together to give speedy approval to the most efficient means of its control.

CARNATION REVOLUTION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise today to recognize the 44th anniversary of 25 de Abril, the Carnation Revolution, which was a pivotal moment in the history of Portugal.

On April 25, the Portuguese community celebrates the peaceful deposition of the authoritarian party Estado Novo that had ruled Portugal from 1926 until its fall in 1974.

April 25, 1974, is undoubtedly a pivotal moment in the history of Portugal. What started as a military coup organized by the Movimento das Forças soon became an unanticipated and unprecedented campaign of civil resistance. What came next was not only the fall of the Estado Novo but also the withdrawal of Portugal from its African colonies and East Timor.

The name "Carnation Revolution" comes from the fact that what was supposed to be an armed revolution transformed into a population that took to the streets to celebrate the end of a long and unforgiving dictatorship and war in the colonies by placing carnations into the muzzles of rifles and on the uniforms of the army.

This past weekend, I attended a gala dinner hosted by the cultural association of April 25. Present were also Capitães de Abril, Colonel Jorge Henriques Caetano and Colonel António Marques Lopes, who came from Portugal to be present at this event.

Mr. Speaker, as a Portuguese Canadian, I stand here today as a beneficiary of the courage and compassion of so many hundreds of thousands of Portuguese men and women who helped transform Portugal into the country that it is today.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise today to acknowledge the exemplary job done in my riding to bring more accessible health care into rural communities. The nature of my riding makes access to care difficult for many.

During my tenure as MPP for Parry Sound–Muskoka, I have witnessed tireless work on both sides of the riding

to create sustainable and connected nursing stations and health hubs, which have proven to be a model for rural health care.

With four health hubs, including a mobile unit in Muskoka, and an impressive six nursing stations operating under the West Parry Sound Health Centre, my riding has a very unique care model. This model has proven to be so successful that this year, both sides of the riding are celebrating some milestones.

As of April 1 of this year, it was announced that the Muskoka Community Health Hub demonstration project has been approved for permanent funding by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. I want to thank the minister for that.

Just this afternoon, the West Parry Sound Health Centre is celebrating an expansion of care being offered at every one of its nursing stations, with the addition of more health care practitioners. The new on-site service visits will now include mental health, social work, physiotherapy, nursing, and additional nurse practitioner time.

In representing both of these areas, I often hear from constituents about their difficulty accessing care, but I have also heard from many how these new and improved services are making their lives better.

I particularly want to thank the nurse practitioners in the Parry Sound area for their exemplary services of late, as the area struggles to deal with an ongoing doctor shortage. Their presence and care has been touted as a lifesaver in my offices many times over.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 6, An Act to enact the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services Act, 2018 and the Correctional Services and Reintegration Act, 2018, to make related amendments to other Acts, to repeal an Act and to revoke a regulation / Loi édictant la Loi de 2018 sur le ministère de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels et la Loi de 2018 sur les services correctionnels et la réinsertion sociale, apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois et abrogeant une loi et un règlement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 12, 2018, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL PLANNERS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LES URBANISTES CERTIFIÉS

Mr. McMeekin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 64, An Act respecting the regulation of Registered Professional Planners / Projet de loi 64, Loi concernant la réglementation des urbanistes certifiés.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: This bill repeals the Ontario Professional Planners Institute Act, 1994, and enacts an updated and more modern act called the Registered Professional Planners Act, 2018.

The new act continues the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, an organization that governs and regulates its members, made up of urban, regional and rural planners from across the province. The act safeguards consumer protection in the public interest and provides definitions and title protection for professional planners. The act also provides a framework for membership, creates prohibitions and offences respecting designations, and sets out procedures for dealing with complaints against members of the institute.

NO FLAK FOR CARRYING RACKS ACT (HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT), 2018

LOI DE 2018 INTERDISANT LES OBJECTIONS AUX SUPPORTS DE TRANSPORT (MODIFICATION APPORTÉE AU CODE DE LA ROUTE)

Mr. Norm Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to end flak for carrying racks / Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour mettre fin aux objections aux supports de transport.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

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Mr. Norm Miller: The No Flak for Carrying Racks Act (Highway Traffic Amendment), 2018: The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act. If a carrying rack, such as a bicycle rack, is mounted on the rear of a motor vehicle in accordance with the regulations made under the act, a person may drive the vehicle on a highway even if the rack obscures the number plate for the vehicle that is required to be attached to the rear of the vehicle.

ASBESTOS USE PROHIBITION ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 INTERDISANT L'UTILISATION DE L'AMIANTE

Mr. Bailey moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act prohibiting the use of asbestos / Projet de loi 66, Loi interdisant l'utilisation de l'amiante.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Robert Bailey: The bill bans the use, reuse, import, transport or sale of asbestos in Ontario. It also requires the Ministry of Labour to create a register of all provincially owned or leased buildings containing asbestos, and for that register to be updated from time to time as work to remove asbestos from buildings listed on the register is completed.

PETITIONS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Ted Arnott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas as of January 1, 2018, the Ontario government's public holiday pay calculation no longer delivers earned benefits fairly to all employees as the calculation used is not based on the contributions that all employees have made to the business;

"Whereas when the same base wage for both part-time and full-time employees is combined with public holiday pay, the part-time employee that works less days in a week will receive higher earnings per hours worked than that of a full-time employee, resulting in unfair earnings between employees;

"Whereas the Ontario public holiday pay now favours employees that contribute less to a business, which devalues those employees that contribute more to a business;

"Whereas under the pay equity law, employees performing work of equal value are to have equal wages, and that the wages consist of all forms of remunerations, including vacation pay and bonuses. Yet the Ontario government currently mandates employers to break this pay equity law by enforcing an unfairly proportioned

public holiday pay that can result in part-time employees receiving higher wages for hours worked than full-time employees;

"Whereas the current holiday pay calculation raises the question of lawfulness and fairness to the employer that is now forced to provide additional financial aid instead of an earned benefit to an employee;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abolish the current public holiday pay calculation and reinstate the prior Ontario public holiday pay calculation as it was in 2017; to recognize that the requirement of the employer is to pay an employee for earned benefits and that unearned benefits are not the responsibility of the employer; to ensure that the government of Ontario and all aspects of Bill 148 are in compliance with pay equity laws and do not mandate that employers pay a higher wage to one employee over another; to recognize that policies and laws need to be fair to both employees and employers."

ENERGY POLICIES

M^{me} France G  linas: I would like to thank Vince Meunier from Westree in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas hydro bills in Ontario have become unaffordable for too many people, and that reducing hydro bills by up to 30% for families and businesses is an ambitious but realistic target; and

"Whereas the only way to fix the hydro system is to address the root causes of high prices including privatization, excessive profit margins, oversupply and more; and

"Whereas Ontario families should not have to pay time-of-use premiums, and those living in a rural or northern region should not have to pay higher, punitive, delivery charges; and

"Whereas returning Hydro One to public ownership would deliver over \$7 billion back to the province and the people of Ontario";

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

Reduce "hydro bills for businesses and families by up to 30%, eliminating mandatory time-of-use, ending unfair rural delivery costs, and restoring public ownership of Hydro One."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and will ask Harsaajan to bring it to the Clerk.

VOTING AGE

Mr. Arthur Potts: I, too, have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend section 15(1)(a) of the Election Act to lower the eligible voting age in Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pursuant to S. 15(1)(a) of the Election Act, every person is entitled to vote who, on the general polling day, has attained 18 years of age; and

"Whereas youth in Ontario want to be politically engaged; and

"Whereas younger person(s) have a vested interest in the selection of their political representatives; and

"Whereas young person(s) should not have to pay taxes without representation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions including (and not limiting) Austria and Brazil have extended the eligible voter age ...; and

"Whereas electoral polls indicate a higher rate of electoral turnout in these jurisdictions; and

"Whereas young person(s) have the knowledge and maturity to participate in the electoral process;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario lower the eligible voter age to 16 years old, pursuant to amendments made to S. 15(1)(a) Election Act."

I certainly agree with this. It ties right in with my private member's bill, Speaker, and I initial it and send it down with page Mia.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas an industrial wind turbine (IWT) project is being proposed for the community where I live; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) created revised guidelines for developers to use in modelling the noise level that the turbines will cause at nearby receptors, in order to correct known errors in the existing noise modelling; and

"Whereas the MOECC allowed large renewable procurement 1 (LRP1) IWT developers the option to use the new noise modelling guidelines, using the transition provisions; and

"Whereas the developer of the project in my neighbourhood opted to use the outdated noise modelling guidelines in the development of the project in my community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"To rescind the renewable energy approval transition provisions and make it mandatory that all LRP1 IWT developers use the new noise modelling guidelines."

I agree with this petition, and I hope the Minister of Energy does as well.

INJURED WORKERS

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition, titled "Workers' Comp is a Right."

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas about 200,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario are injured on the job every year;

"Whereas over a century ago, workers in Ontario who were injured on the job gave up the right to sue their

employers, in exchange for a system that would provide them with just compensation;

"Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

"Whereas injured workers have the right to quality and timely medical care, compensation for lost wages, and protection from discrimination;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to accomplish the following for injured workers in Ontario:

"Eliminate the practice of 'deeming' or 'determining,' which bases compensation on phantom jobs that injured workers do not actually have;

"Ensure that the WSIB prioritizes and respects the medical opinions of the health care providers who treat the injured worker directly;

"Prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on 'pre-existing conditions' that never affected the worker's ability to function prior to the work injury."

I couldn't agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I'll affix my name to it and give it to page Ryan-Michael to bring to the Clerk.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition that is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas one in three women will experience some form of sexual assault in her lifetime;

"When public education about sexual violence and harassment is not prioritized, myths and attitudes informed by misogyny become prevalent. This promotes rape culture;

"Less than 10% of sexual violence cases are reported to police. For every 33 that are reported, only" one results in a conviction;

"Sexual violence and harassment survivors too often feel revictimized by the systems set in place to support them. The voices of survivors, in all their diversity, need to be amplified; ...

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the findings and recommendations of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment's final report, highlighting the need for inclusive and open dialogue to address misogyny and rape culture; educate about sexual violence and harassment to promote social change; fund sexual assault support services adequately to meet the demand for their counselling and public education programs; address systemic assumptions...."

I agree with this petition. I will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Stephanie.

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WIND TURBINES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have an important petition signed by thousands of people and addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas an industrial wind turbine (IWT) project is being proposed for the community where I live; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) reated revised guidelines for developers to use in modelling the noise level that the turbines will cause at nearby receptors in order to correct known errors in the existing noise modelling; and ...

"Whereas the developer of the project in my neighbourhood opted to use the outdated noise modelling guidelines in the development of the project in my community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"To rescind the renewable energy approval transition provisions and make it mandatory that all LRP1 IWT developers use the new noise modelling guidelines."

I'm proud to support this and hope the government changes their mind.

PROVINCIAL TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION DAY

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: Proclaim June 21 as a Statutory Holiday Called Provincial Day for Truth and Reconciliation in Ontario.

"Whereas June 21 is recognized as the summer solstice and holds cultural significance for many indigenous cultures; and

"Whereas in 1982, the National Indian Brotherhood (Assembly of First Nations) called for the creation of a National Aboriginal Solidarity Day to be celebrated on June 21; and

"Whereas in 1990, Québec recognized June 21 as a day to celebrate the achievements and cultures of indigenous peoples;

"Whereas in 1995, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended that a National First Peoples Day be designated;

"Whereas in 1996, the Governor General of Canada proclaimed June 21 as National Aboriginal Day in response to these calls;

"Whereas in 2001, Northwest Territories became the first province or territory to recognize June 21 as a statutory holiday; and

"Whereas in 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendation number 80 called on the federal government, in collaboration with aboriginal peoples, to establish a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as a statutory holiday;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To designate June 21 of each year as a legal statutory holiday to be kept and observed throughout Ontario. This day should serve to create and strengthen opportunities for reconciliation and cultural exchange among Ontarians. The day should facilitate connections between indigenous and non-indigenous Ontarians in positive and meaningful ways. This day should solidify the original intent of National Aboriginal Day as a day for Ontarians to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples."

I fully support this petition and give it to page Faraaz to deliver to the table.

GOVERNMENT ANTI-RACISM PROGRAMS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians are concerned that individual, systemic and cultural racism continues to create unfair outcomes for racial minorities in Ontario;

"Whereas the time has come to remove the social and economic barriers that prevent our province from achieving true equality;

"Whereas in order to accomplish that objective and to tackle racism in all of its forms, our government has created the new Anti-Racism Directorate;

"We, the undersigned, acknowledge both our support for the concept behind the Anti-Racism Directorate, and recognize that there is still work to be done to build an inclusive Ontario where everyone, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or cultural background, has an equal opportunity to succeed.

"Therefore, we petition the government to work with key partners, such as businesses, community organizations, educational institutions and the Ontario Human Rights Commission in an effort to create a scope for the Anti-Racism Directorate.

"This petition encourages the directorate to consider initiatives that would increase public education and awareness of racism, and to consider various methods by which a wide anti-racism lens can be applied during the development, implementation and evaluation of government policies, programs and services."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition. I will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Eric.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas an industrial wind turbine (IWT) project is being proposed for the community where I live; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) created revised guidelines for developers to use in modelling the noise level that the turbines will cause at nearby receptors, in order to correct known errors in the existing noise modelling; and

"Whereas the MOECC allowed large renewable procurement 1 (LRP1) IWT developers the option to use the new noise modelling guidelines, using the transition provisions; and

"Whereas the developer of the project in my neighbourhood opted to use the outdated noise modelling guidelines in the development of the project in my community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"To rescind the renewable energy approval transition provisions and make it mandatory that all LRP1 IWT developers use the new noise modelling guidelines."

I have thousands of names on this petition.

CELIAC DISEASE

M^{me} France Gélinais: I would like to thank Erin Wood from Fort Frances, in Kenora-Rainy River, for this petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the IgA TTG blood screening is the internationally recognized standard as the first step in diagnosing a person with celiac disease;

"Whereas celiac disease is an autoimmune disease that can strike people with a genetic predisposition at any time of life and presents with a large variety of non-specific signs and symptoms;

"Whereas many individuals, such as family members of diagnosed celiacs, are at higher risk and pre-symptomatic screening is advised;

"Whereas covering the cost of the simple test would dramatically reduce wait times to diagnosis, save millions to the health care system due to misdiagnoses, unnecessary testing and serious complications from untreated celiac disease and reduce the painful suffering and health decline of thousands of individuals;

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not to cover this blood test";

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To cover the cost of the diagnostic blood test (IgA TTG) for celiac disease for those who show symptoms, are a first-degree relative or have an associated condition."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask page Eric to bring it to the Clerk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for petitions this afternoon.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT WAGES ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LES SALAIRES POUR LES MARCHÉS PUBLICS

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 26, 2018, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act respecting the establishment of minimum government contract wages / Projet de loi 53, Loi concernant la fixation de salaires minimums pour les marchés publics.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this bill, the member for Haldimand–Norfolk had the floor but had concluded his remarks, I understand. He's here. We ask now for questions and comments related to the presentation that was given by the member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

I recognize the member for Nickel Belt on questions and comments.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was last week that the honourable member made comment on Bill 53. Bill 53 is there to establish minimum government contract wages that the government would pay for building cleaning work and security services work. It is something that is very limited in its scope and very limited in its application. For construction work, at least the applicable minimum government contract wages shall be paid before the procurement process, if it is set. Here again, the particulars of where this minimum wage would apply are very narrow, and a lot of the enforcement of it relies on people making complaints.

I can tell you, Speaker, that if you are in a situation where you're in precarious employment, if you have to initiate a complaint in order to be a beneficiary of this bill, most people are not going to do this. We know from many other bills that fall under the Ministry of Labour that where it is complaint-driven, a lot of departures, I will call them, from the law or the spirit of the laws that exist happen every day in our province simply because there isn't the proper oversight and proper number of inspectors to make sure the labour laws are being enforced. The bill says, "Provision is made for the enforcement of these rights and duties by means of complaints to the Ministry of Labour." This is a very small step.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

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Mrs. Liz Sandals: I am very pleased to comment on Bill 53, the Government Contract Wages Act. To quote our Premier, Premier Wynne, "Every worker deserves to be paid a fair wage. And every business bidding for a government contract deserves a fair shot." Where this bill comes from is that, of course, if you're going to get a contract to build government infrastructure, to clean a government building or provide government security services, there must be a fair and open competition; that is, you go to tender or RFP and there's a competitive process.

What we don't want to see happen is have people win contracts by undercutting what they pay their workers. That's what this bill does. There actually was a fair wage bill years ago which did exactly this, but it hasn't been updated for decades, so the wage is so low and out of date. We need to make this up to date so that everybody who bids on government contracts must pay a fair wage to the people that they are going to employ to do that

contract. The bill would apply to people in construction, building services, as I said—things like security, and building cleaning services—to make sure that all those folks get a fair wage.

I want to say that there's quite a contrast here to what we've seen with the leader of the Conservatives, Doug Ford, and his promise that he would actually roll back the \$15 minimum wage legislation with the \$15 that would, with our legislation, take effect on January 1—and his commitment to cut that back.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to join the debate. I'll be speaking at length later on today regarding Bill 53, An Act respecting the establishment of minimum government contract wages.

Regardless of what the members are saying opposite, our caucus, our party, believes that everyone should earn a living wage in Ontario. We are fighting for low-income people in this province by offering policy ideas to put more money back into their pockets. Our leader, Doug Ford, has quite clearly said that if you make minimum wage in the province of Ontario, you shouldn't pay any provincial income tax. That's real relief; that's putting money back in the pockets of hard-working people in this province.

With this issue specifically and Bill 53, the stakeholders have long been calling for this legislation to come forward. But like every single other thing we've seen from this Premier and this government over the last number of months, they know that there is an election coming. This piece of legislation in particular was introduced in this Legislature two weeks before the beginning of an election campaign. If they had concerns for all those hard-working people in Ontario out there, they should have been doing something about this.

The member from Guelph mentioned that it was a former PC government that introduced legislation to make changes a number of years ago, but I have to remind the members opposite that this government has been in charge now for 15 years, and, Speaker, they have done nothing when it comes to this issue.

I see this as another cynical ploy by the Liberals. They're trying to win the election that's going to be on June 7, but it's our party and our leader, Doug Ford, who is going to put more money in the pockets of hard-working people in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to add a few minutes of comments on Bill 53, the Government Contract Wages Act. This two-minute opportunity is in response, I think, to the longer comments made by the PCs. I wasn't in the room to catch all of that and I really wish that I were, because I know that I have questions about their stance on this. I certainly know that Ontarians have questions when it comes to their thoughts and ideas about fair wages and contract employment. To hear the member talk about living wages and fair wages, I've got to give

my head a shake. I wonder if their ideas of living wages would align with those of the folks who are so desperate to earn a fair wage and earn that living wage and to have those protections for basic wages. Where were they with the \$15 and fairness campaign? They were nowhere to be seen, and now they've come out saying that that is not the right direction for the province, and it absolutely is. Of course it is. If you ask anyone doing the heavy lifting and the work in this province, they deserve to be paid fairly.

The member who just spoke reminded us that there's an election on the horizon, on June 7. I don't think that I have to remind anyone in this room or the folks in Ontario, because they are absolutely ready for change. They're ready for a change for the better. No one in Ontario is interested anymore in this race to the bottom. They deserve better in the province. They deserve fairness when it comes to wages, when it comes to workplace protections, and they're going to ensure that they have it going forward.

I love that they are dropping language like "living wage" and "fair wages"; I just wish that they would stand behind that and the people in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Haldimand-Norfolk can respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, Speaker, I do wish to comment further on Bill 53. It's obviously another minimum wage bill. We saw one of these come through a year ago. We have certainly received feedback on so much of the negative impacts of minimum wage legislation—in this case, a minimum wage for government contracts for cleaning staff, construction and security.

Obviously, this government makes it very clear that it supports contract work and it supports outsourcing. Maybe that can be seen as a positive in bringing in contract legislation like this, but it has to recognize that there is a big disparity in remuneration. Cleaning staff in, say, a factory or an office, compared to a government office, make a lot less money.

I think the other thing that's very important, perhaps the benefit of Bill 53, is that it does put a spotlight on public sector compensation. It talks about minimum wage. We don't know where this will lead. There will be staff appointed to take a look at bringing in fairness. In this case, it would mean increasing wages in the government sector. It's not looking at increasing wages in the private sector, and that can be debated.

But when we look at compensation, we've got to look at so many other things, and this legislation clearly recognizes that, if you work for the government, you make an awful lot more than if you work for the private sector for comparable work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will try to use my time wisely regarding Bill 53, the 20 minutes that are allotted to me to talk about this bill, An Act respecting the establishment of minimum government contract wages.

Just to put it into a little bit of perspective: In 1995—a long, long time ago, remember?—this bill was first brought forward. It was an important bill at the time, and I would say that it is still an important bill. But when you look at the time frame, it's from 1995 to 2018, and for the last 15 years that the Liberals have been in power, they never saw it as important enough to revise this bill to bring it up to today's standards. But six days before the writ drops, all of a sudden it becomes very important that we deal with this.

I'm thinking, "Where have you been?" I don't like to give people false hope; I don't like for us to be led to believe that something will happen when the chances of this happening are zero. Even if they time-allocate—I assume that by mid-afternoon this afternoon, we will have reached the magic 6.5 hours of debate, and at the first opportunity they have, one of the Liberal members will stand up and say, "This is it. We've talked enough. Time-allocate it."

1350

Still, most of the bill relies on regulations that have not seen the time of day—regulations that, frankly, have not been written up and have no chance of ever being written up, put into the Gazette, given a minimum of 30 days, usually 60 days, for people to comment, and become a reality in six days. So I will talk about the issue of fair wages, but to say that what's in this bill has any chance of seeing the light of day—it does not. I wish it did.

When the bill was brought forward in 1995, it was relevant, it was meaningful, and it did help a lot of people who worked in the cleaning area and a lot of people who worked in the construction area. If they were getting a contract coming from the provincial government, they got paid a fair wage. This is great. But I can tell you that this bill has not been looked at for 23 years, which means that the amounts that are in the bill as it stands right now are below minimum wage. The need to upgrade that legislation has been there for quite some time with no interest, apparently, by the government in power to do just that, except six days before an election, when there is absolutely zero chance that regulations will be written so that this bill will actually become reality and help the people it is meant to help.

To give you a little bit of background on this: In 1997, an NDP government put forward a fair wage bill, and it is still in place. In 2007, we had a Liberal government in power, and there was enough of a push that they actually commissioned a report. They had a professor from the University of Toronto's Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources conduct a full, independent review of Ontario's fair wage policy. They knew, in 2007, that the bill needed to be updated. This good professor did the full review and wrote his report. Many of us on this side of the House read the report and saw the good things that were in it.

The government has had this report for 11 long years and has never seen the need to actually work on this till six days before the writ drops. Now, six days before the

writ drops, it becomes an emergency that we get the bill passed, with zero chance of having regulations and it becoming a reality for the workers depending on us to help them with a fair wage policy.

In 2008, the report was submitted to the government. For reasons unknown, it was never released to the public. Those of us who got a copy didn't get it through the government; I can guarantee you this.

No update has been made to Ontario's fair wage policy. I would say that for the last 10 years this issue was completely off the agenda. But here we are, six days before the writ drops, and we are talking about this.

If you look at what's in the bill, some people will tell you that it is rather surprising that it does not take into account the recommendations that were made in 2008. But what's even more surprising is that they never did a new consultation. The last one was done in 2007; we're now in 2018. You figure that if they were really interested in this topic, maybe they would have asked the good professor, or a similar fellow, to brush it up a bit. There's only 10 years' worth of dust collected on top of it. They could have gone out to the field and talked to people who are interested in this topic. Certainly the Ontario Federation of Labour would have a thing or two to say about this. We have lots of universities—I'll include Laurentian University—that have top-notch labour studies that do a lot of work on what a fair wage policy should look like, but none of that was done; nothing.

Out of the blue, eight days before the writ drops—and we're now six days before the writ drops—this bill is introduced. It becomes an emergency, and it is so narrow in its focus, it is almost sad. Don't get me wrong. Do I want to dust off the fair wage policy? Absolutely. Is this the way to do this? Absolutely not.

Presently, we have people like David Frame, who said that basically the skilled trades right now are so competitive that if a worker feels that he or she isn't receiving fair compensation, likely they would be able to find more lucrative work in their field just about anywhere across the province. Maybe they should have taken the time to listen to the people in the field before they introduced their bill so that some of that feedback could have been taken into account.

Of course, the gaping hole is that the government is only using a few workers within that sector. "The act provides for the establishment of minimum government contract wages that shall be paid for building cleaning work and security services work ... and for construction work...." That's it; that's all.

Things have changed. Now, even when you talk about building cleaning work, there is a group of workers that all they do are windows. They clean inside and outside the windows. We're not sure if they are considered building cleaning workers. Are they? Are they not? They don't know, and the bill is silent on this. The same thing with security service work. If the work happens in a place where there are other tenants around and there's already a security service, will that apply to them? It doesn't look

like it will because, if the government is only using part of that building, then this bill won't apply.

This is very problematic, Speaker, because it leaves out a whole lot of workers in our province who happen to be defined in the bill but, as we can see, won't be covered because things have changed in 22 years. The government used to own their own buildings and provide programs and services to the people of Ontario from buildings that they owned; more and more now, you see services being provided in mixed-tenant buildings where there will be services from the provincial government, but you could also see private services or not-for-profit associations all under one roof because it makes sense for the type of service that will be provided there.

But it's not the way things were done in 1995. In 1995, it sort of made sense to describe workers that way. In 2018, it doesn't make much sense anymore.

Then comes the part where it becomes even more problematic where I will quote from the bill, which says, "Provision is made for the enforcement of these rights and duties by means of complaints to the Ministry of Labour. The process is analogous to the enforcement process under the Employment Standards Act, 2000, and several provisions of that act are incorporated by reference into the act." Basically what that means is that there won't be any enforcement. There won't be any proactive checking to make sure that those workers get the amount of money that is owed to them. There won't be any of that.

1400

It will be up to the workers to first of all know that this law exists; right there is a stretch. If you're not unionized, if you're a young worker, if you're part of the gig economy, if this is your first time at work or if you are precarious and are just really, really happy to have a few dollars coming your way at the end of the week—what are the chances that those workers will actually put in a complaint, even if they did know that they are allowed to be paid more?

They seem to have forgotten the human element of every worker. There's this element that they know full well that if they are the one who rings the alarm bell, they will also be the one who will lose their job. There will be a very good reason why they don't need their services anymore, and it will be set out as an example for all of those other workers who are not being paid a fair wage, who are not being respected by this law, to keep quiet and keep working, because if you put in a complaint, the same thing will happen to you. We have many, many examples of that.

In my riding, I have lots of trucking industry. The ores are mined, and the mines are all outside of the downtown in more rural areas. They get trucked in to the smelters, the crushers and the different plants, so we have a lot of trucks going on. Well, health and safety says that if you get to your truck and your truck is not safe, you have a right to refuse work.

It happens all the time. Workers will go and see that the brakes are failing on their trucks. They are carrying I

don't know how many, but tens of tonnes of ores on the backs of their trucks. They know full well that if they need to apply the brakes and there's a kid in front of them, they don't want to be the one responsible for an accident, so they refuse work. And it's always the same thing: For some strange reason, within two or three days they won't be needing their services anymore, and they find themselves on the blacklist as somebody who reported unsafe work.

When you call the Ministry of Labour to say, "Hey, I think they lost their job because they reported unsafe work, which is under the standards," nothing happens. Absolutely nothing happens. I actually have a freedom-of-access-to-information in to the government right now to see how many of those complaints actually led to a reversal of the findings, and I have yet to receive anything. But I can tell you that if one MPP has as many as I do, that number of workers, you multiply that by 107 MPPs to say that we will have another one of those bills that are supposed to protect workers, but the duty is left by means of complaints to the Ministry of Labour—it doesn't make me feel warm and fuzzy or anything, because I know full well what that will mean to the people who speak up.

Interjection: Nothing. "You're fired."

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, it doesn't mean too much, or it means you lose your job, which means that it's all for nothing.

If you are serious that you want fair wages—by the way, I'm really proud to talk about when John Rodriguez was mayor of the city of Greater Sudbury. John Rodriguez was an NDP MP for many, many decades, actually, in Nickel Belt, and when he became mayor of the city of Greater Sudbury, he put forward a fair wage policy for everything that the city did. This fair wage policy is still in place, the city of Greater Sudbury is still afloat and things still get done. Workers in Sudbury are paid a fair wage, but it is not complaint-based; it is in the contract. There are people who oversee this. It can be done.

When the will is there, the way is there also, because it exists. Right here, right now, in my city, in Sudbury, we have a fair wage policy for contract work for everything the city does, and it works. Why is it that at the provincial level they say the right thing—it always sounds really good that the government is committed to a fair wage policy—but this is where the feel-good ends?

As soon as you turn the first page of the bill and you start to look at what's in it, as soon as you look at when the bill was introduced, how it's going to be implemented and how workers are actually going to be protected, you realize that the commitment is not there. The headline is there and the title is there, but nothing else is there. All of the foundations that we know need to be in place in order to bring forward a fair wage policy were all left behind, all to be done at a time yet to be determined—if and when the Liberal government wins the next election. Who are we kidding here? This is not going to see the end of day.

To make matters worse, Bill 53 won't apply to current contracts. If you look at many of the contracts that exist, some of them are for pretty long periods of time. We're talking many years that the existing contracts are in place. Bill 53 won't bring fair wages to those people. I am guessing that by the time those contracts are up for renewal, the fair wage policy will have been the same thing as the one we had in 1995: completely irrelevant and ineffective, because things will have changed so much.

There are many things that people wanted them to address, one that the member from Hamilton Mountain presented a petition about today: deeming. This is something that needs to be addressed and could have been addressed in the labour bill. We're opening up the labour bill; why didn't we get it done? But it didn't.

The opportunities to talk about changing the labour laws—something that is very near and dear to the people of Sudbury, since we had the one-year-long Vale strike, is the use of replacement workers. We know full well that the strike in Sudbury dragged on for almost a year and the strike in Brant dragged on over a year because of replacement workers. There is no valid reason why Ontario could not bring back an anti-replacement-worker, an anti-scab, policy. We have the labour bill open. Why didn't we get that done so that we can guarantee that the next strike—nobody likes strikes and nobody likes—not lock-offs—

Miss Monique Taylor: Lock-outs.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Lock-outs—sorry; I'm thinking in French. It happens every now and again.

Nobody likes those, but they do happen. When they happen, we know that the use of replacement workers makes them last way longer. But here again, an opportunity in the labour bill to do the right thing: Nothing right is being done by this bill, six days before the writ drops, with huge, gaping holes in it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments. The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Daiene Vernile: Thank you very much, Speaker, and good afternoon to you and to all members of this House. I'm pleased for the opportunity to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 53, the Government Contract Wages Act.

The member for Nickel Belt spent some time asking the question why: Why bring this forward now at this time? The answer to that question is: Because it's always a good time to ensure Ontario workers are paid fairly.

This legislation hasn't been updated in over a decade.

Interjection.

Hon. Daiene Vernile: I would ask the person who is laughing at us right now when they think it would have been a good time to do this. Now is the time to do this. It's always a good time to address wages for employees in Ontario.

This is all about fairness. Getting government contracts should not be an invitation to lower wages for workers. Workers' wages should not be the primary factor in bidding. Ontario is committed to building a

strong workforce. Fair, balanced and progressive policies need to be there for both workers and employees.

We have instituted a plan that includes making the largest investment in public infrastructure in Ontario's history. It's going to mean more jobs for workers in many sectors right across the province of Ontario. We want to make sure that we have in place a fair wage policy that is going to ensure that workers are going to benefit from this. We want to make sure that they are treated fairly and that they get paid what they deserve to be paid.

1410

Speaker, we also want to make sure that all contractors are working from the same rule book, that they are all playing by the same rules. I encourage all members of this House to support this important piece of legislation so that those who work on the types of government contracts that are covered by this proposed legislation will be paid fairly and be paid a livable wage. I fully support this legislation and I encourage all members of the House to do so as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Listening to the member from Nickel Belt, I think most of us will concur that the theme of her debate has merit. She calls into question the government's motives and rationale for this, and rightly so. I did listen to the member opposite, who was sort of somewhat surprised that there were people laughing at her response. Well, hearing that response, I can understand why the whole province would be laughing at those comments by the Liberal member opposite.

Speaker, there's much that you can say about this bill, but in my 11 years as an MPP, I have never had anybody who has been receiving a paycheque from the government or employed on a contract with the government come into my office and complain that their wages are too low. That hasn't happened for me. It may have happened with others. It just hasn't happened for me.

When you look in the bill, here we have this government, in its last throes of power, building a new bureaucracy. They want to build a new directorate of government contract wages. We already have a Ministry of Labour. We already have an Employment Standards Act. We already have the Ontario Labour Relations Board. They just can't have enough bureaucracy. They need another directorate, and they want to be able to appoint who is going to be flush with loot. Maybe one of the retiring members is seeking the new directorate.

I will say that this bill is full of jiggy-pokery and balderdash. It's really just hocus pocus at the end of this session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw. Do you know which one? Yes, I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes, I do. You do, too, because I think you tried to use it before and have been asked to withdraw.

Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: It's always a pleasure to listen to the member from Nickel Belt and her depiction of the bills that come before this House. She laid out a very clear picture of what New Democrats read in this Bill G53, government contract wages. This is something that should have been done many years ago. We've heard of a report that's been sitting on a shelf for 11 years, which is quite typical for this government, and we've seen it time and time again. And now, six days before the writ drops for the election, we're debating a bill that's never going to see the light of committee. It is never going to fix the problems that are currently there.

This bill covers the institutional, commercial, and infrastructure sector, the sector that does government contracts for work that needs to be done in this province. To see it and to realize that workers are being underpaid by this government is absolutely shameful, and they've been sitting on this for so many years. Now, as another last-ditch attempt to try to gain some political points, they've put this in front of us. It's absolutely something that needs to be done; it's unfortunate that it is at such a late time that it's coming forward.

We have seen other labour bills come before us. We've seen Bill 148. We've seen other bills where this could have been implemented as part of it to actually work for the people who need this to happen.

We will support it, but I think it's unfortunate that it will never see the light of day and meet the standards that it needs to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Han Dong: I'm pleased to lend my thoughts on this bill, responding to the member from Nickel Belt's debate.

I heard across the floor a member from the NDP talking about our record on protecting the most vulnerable workers in society. I think that we have a very good track record. We went out there and did consultations—two rounds: the first right after first reading and one after second reading on Bill 148 to raise the minimum wage to \$14 this year and going up to \$15 next year. It took a lot of political will to do that.

I think this bill is consistent with the spirit of Bill 148: to make sure that whoever is out there working hard can earn a living wage and, at the end of the day, put food on the table to support their family. In fact, I know a lot of government agencies, the broader public service, have already provided that and have paid their workers, if they're in a contract or received a contract, a fair wage.

But just look back to when the opposition, including the NDP, were in power. What's their track record in terms of paying people a livable wage? I was too young to remember, but I get stories and people tell me that the last time the NDP were in government, they wanted people to work for free. On this side of the floor, we believe that when people work, they have to earn a good, respectful wage.

Hon. Daiene Vernile: Remember Rae Days?

Mr. Han Dong: Exactly, exactly. When they were in power, they expected people to work for free. We don't believe that.

We have a good track record. Let's support this bill. I do agree that it's long overdue. We should get this thing through as soon as possible and get it done before this Parliament dissolves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now return to the member for Nickel Belt for her response.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, my colleague from Hamilton Mountain and the MPP from Trinity–Spadina for their remarks.

The first question asked by the minister was, “When would it be a good time to introduce such a bill?” Well, the report was tabled with you in 2008, so I would say any time in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016 or 2017, when you brought forward Bill 148 and the NDP made amendments, would have been a really good time to do this. Six days before the writ drops? Not so much.

You cannot convince anybody listening to this that this was important for you. Had it been important to you, you would have dusted off the 10 years' worth of dust on that report way before. You would have gone out to the field and talked about it. You would have listened to some of the amendments that the NDP tried to make in Bill 148. You had many, many opportunities to do what you are trying to do, but you did not take them. You waited until the last minute so that you have a nice, catchy title.

I fully agree with the title. It sounds pretty good: An Act respecting the establishment of minimum government contract wages. Everybody likes a fair wage, but the content of the bill is not there, and the time when the bill was introduced is very, very suspicious.

The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington used words that I am not allowed to repeat because he was made to withdraw them, but they pretty well carry the spirit as to what a lot of people think of that bill. We will use the “hocus-pocus” part of his comments. I agree with him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

1420

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to talk a little bit about Bill 53. I will be sharing my time with the member from Scarborough Centre.

I think maybe I'll just begin where the member opposite ended, because there seem to be a lot of comments here on timing. The truth of the matter is, perhaps it's something that needs to be done, but given that the NDP seem to be quite determined that it was something that should have been done a lot sooner, they could, if they really thought this was important, have brought forward a private member's bill. Perhaps it's timely that we all work together and get it done now quickly, given that I think at least with the NDP there's consensus that the principle is a reasonably good one.

Let's talk about what the principle here really is. The requirement for the government to let a contract to get people to do something—it might be to build a building, it might be to build a road, or it might be to upgrade the tracks for Metrolinx for GO trains. It might be to do some work on sewers. It might be to contract for cleaning government buildings. It might be a contract for security in buildings. It might not just be ministries per se; it could be government agencies. I mentioned Metrolinx. It could be Infrastructure Ontario. There's a whole bunch of government agencies. In all those situations, the rule which applies is that there must be an open and competitive procurement process, which is to say that it needs to either go out for a competitive request for proposals if it's a big construction project, or, even if it's a relatively smaller project, it still needs to go out for a competitive tender.

What we sometimes see happening is that the way people win that tender, the way they win that competition, is by undercutting the wages that are generally paid in the community. They put forward a tender where the reason it's the lowest tender is because they're assuming they are going to pay the people working on that contract below the market value for whatever it is: below the market value for electricians, below the market value for security or below the market value for people who are operating heavy equipment to construct roads and sewers. Whatever it is, they're winning the contract by paying people less than the going rate for that job in the community.

As a government, we certainly don't like to see that happen. We want to see the people who benefit from the infrastructure spending that's going on—and there's literally billions of dollars of spending on Ontario public sector infrastructure going on right now. We want to see the hundreds of thousands of jobs that are being created, thousands and thousands, tens of thousands certainly of jobs that are created by government contracts—we want to see those people get a fair wage. We want to see them get the going rate for whatever the job is in their community.

What this bill does very simply is, it looks at setting a minimum rate for various jobs that could be related to government tendering. In particular, it's explicitly enumerated that this will apply in various types of work. It's explicitly enumerated in the bill that this would apply to all government ministries. It applies to 152 public bodies, and I already mentioned some of those—bodies like Metrolinx, Infrastructure Ontario, the LCBO, people who are all spending significant amounts of money on government contracts.

It would apply to the following types of work. It would apply to work in relationship to construction projects provided under contracts with government entities in the following sectors of the construction industry. It applies to industrial, commercial and institutional construction, what's often referred to as ICI construction. It would refer not just to the ICI building sector, but it would also apply to the road construction sector, the

sewers and water mains and heavy engineering; that is, that heavy equipment that I mentioned.

It also applies to building security services, and cleaning work for buildings that are either owned or occupied by government entities. In many cases, especially when you get away from the immediate area of Queen's Park here, there are government offices in buildings that are leased, not just buildings that are directly owned by the government. If you're talking about security or cleaning, this would apply whether the building is directly owned or whether it's leased. If it's operated by the government for a government purpose, this would apply.

Now, if you were to read the bill, you would realize that those wages are not explicitly laid out in the bill. The reason for that is that, in some ways, what got us here in the first place is that the original bill from 1995, which does essentially the same thing, was much more specific about the amount of the wages, but, of course, as wages naturally inflated over the years, the bill became irrelevant. Because what was prescribed in the bill became so much lower than the going rate, the bill just became irrelevant. Certainly what I hear from people who come to my office—because unlike the member from—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you. Unlike the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, I actually have had people come to my office and express a concern about needing to update the bill in question.

What I am told is that when the wages in the bill were realistic, in fact it was a very useful mechanism to ensure that people were not bidding on government work with the deliberate intention of paying people less than they deserved, paying an unfair wage in order to win a contract.

What this bill actually does is it sets up a mechanism to work with the people in the various sectors that I just talked about, to go out and talk to people. Yes, the member opposite is correct: We are going to have to have some people who are designated the responsibility of going and consulting, because we think it's important to go out and talk to people who represent the workers. We're interested in talking to the unions. We're interested in talking to the non-unionized workers. We're also interested in talking to the companies, to the owners of the businesses that would actually be doing the bidding. That is, we want to talk to everybody who will be affected by this bill.

Somebody actually needs to do that, so, yes, Speaker, there will be a directorate which has the responsibility for doing this, but the directorate will be staffed by people who already work within the Ministry of Labour. We're not going out and hiring more bureaucrats to do this; we're simply assigning some bureaucrats to having this specific responsibility.

The responsibility, though, as I say, will be to go and consult with people and come up with a reasonable regime for defining what a fair wage is in a variety of sectors, and also a mechanism for keeping this up to date.

What we don't want to do is repeat the language in the 1995 bill, which just sort of petered out and was no longer effective. We actually want to create a mechanism so that this will self-refresh and that over the years, as inflation changes wages, the regulations will create a mechanism for doing that.

1430

I'm actually very supportive of this because I think we're going to be talking to all the people we need to talk to and we will be coming up with a framework where we can ensure that people who are doing work for the government are being paid a fair wage.

I'm going to turn it over to my colleague from Scarborough Centre now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member from Guelph for outlining, in a very elegant way, how this bill works and how this initiative will roll out, and the impact that this bill will have on everyday Ontarians.

I'm very supportive of Bill 53. This isn't a new concept. The city of Toronto has had a fair wage policy for as long as I know. It was there 20 years ago, I guess, when I was a councillor. It wasn't disastrous. It wasn't overly onerous. To be frank, I never heard a lot of complaints about it from anybody. It was fair. That's why it's called a fair wage.

I think governments have an obligation, when we procure contracts with companies, to ensure that those companies are doing all they can to be good corporate citizens and good corporate partners and look after their workers well—to make sure their work environments are safe, first and foremost, but also to ensure that they're paying their workers a fair wage. We don't necessarily want to dictate what their wages should be. We just want to say that those wages ought to be fair if you're going to get contracts from government. If they're going to go out in the private sector and get contracts in other places and they want to pay a lower wage, that's up to that company, if they can get those contracts, as long as they subscribe to the minimum wage that has been set by the province. But if they're going to get contracts from the province, then there might be just a little bit higher bar—and I don't think companies are going to be resistant to this—that I think companies would be expected to live up to.

I want to comment a little bit on the only opposition argument that I've heard from the other side of the Legislature on this: timing, and that somehow it's cynical of the government to keep working into the last week or so prior to a campaign kicking off. We're not going to stop working on behalf of the people of Ontario just because there's an election on the horizon. They've been making the argument for the last six months that everything we do has something to do with the campaign.

Truth be told, Mr. Speaker, we're not going to get re-elected because of the fair wage policy. That might be one thing that people like in a whole package of things that we've put forward that will provide people with incentive to vote our way in the next campaign. But this

legislation alone is surely not going to be a big issue in the next election. This is just the right thing to do. We're doing it because people have asked us to do it. We're doing it because it's time to get this done. And we'd like to get this done, with the help of the opposition and, I hope, the support of the opposition, before the next election so that it's done, it's in place, and we can ensure that any contracts that go out on behalf of the province of Ontario will ensure that the contractors who receive those contracts are paying their workers a fair wage.

Mr. Speaker, we can afford to do these kinds of initiatives because we have a strong economy right now. That's ground that I think our government ought not cede to anybody in this Legislature. We've worked very hard, partner to partner, shoulder to shoulder, with our business community and workers across this province to build this economy up. It didn't happen by accident. We've invested significantly—somewhere in the neighbourhood of about \$3.5 billion of provincial investment—in business supports. I know the PCs always criticize us for that. But that's about 35,000 net new jobs that have been created or supported as a result of those programs. That's a lot of people whose jobs are in place because we've made those investments.

The investments we've made in those programs have helped in communities from one end of the province to the other, to help ensure that we build up the economies in those communities and create jobs in those communities. Those are programs that we're proud of. Those are the kinds of partnerships that have helped make this province stronger. Those are the kinds of programs that we should be fighting for on the hustings in the next election. Those are the kinds of programs that Doug Ford wants to do without. Sarnia is getting a \$2.4-billion investment—the biggest investment in Ontario in generations. Doug Ford wants to cancel that. Doug Ford wants to take that away. Doug Ford wants to put people out of work in Sarnia.

Mr. Speaker, if we didn't have these programs, if we didn't have the economy that we have today, we wouldn't be able to introduce a bill like this because it would be very, very difficult to ensure that we maintain our competitiveness as we do that. Because of that strong economy, because of those kinds of investments, we can do that.

Sanofi just recently announced another close-to-\$1-billion investment in this province, the largest investment that that huge pharmaceutical company has made outside of France ever, and they are making that investment here in the greater Toronto area. It's going to create tens of thousands of jobs when you look at the indirect jobs related to that. That's the kind of investment that is going to be a cornerstone of our bioscience sector for many years to come. Doug Ford wants to cancel that investment too and do away with all those jobs.

Think about it: Over the next 10 years, if we don't have those kinds of partnerships, that's tens of thousands of jobs that will be lost, or opportunities that we will not be able to compete for globally because we're not in the

game, because Doug Ford wants to play politics over good public policy and economic policy.

Another reason why we've done well in the economy and we can afford to do the kinds of things that we're doing for those that are being left behind is our Business Growth Initiative. That's something that we don't talk about very often, but I think Ontarians would want to make sure that whoever is in government, it's continued. The only way to ensure that we continue that Business Growth Initiative that has been hugely successful is to ensure indeed that this government continues to govern after the next election. What that Business Growth Initiative has done is shift a traditional economic development strategy of really trying to just bring in multinational companies and foreign direct investment—which traditionally has worked for jurisdictions around the world. We recognize that we live in a new economy today, and we want to make sure Ontario is out ahead of that new economy. That's why we're doubling down on investments in innovation. That's why we're doubling down with our post-secondary partners and producing some of the best talent anywhere in the world. That's why we're focusing a lot of our investments on our growth companies, helping our fast runners run even faster. That's a new approach that this province is taking. That's why we're leading the G7 in growth, and have been for the last three years. That's why, Mr. Speaker, we're attracting more foreign direct investment than we have seen in a very long time: one of the leaders in North America, year in and year out. That's why we have an unemployment rate that's at a two-decade low.

The last thing I think Ontarians would want to do is to put those programs at risk. That's something we're going to have to fight for in the next election. But Bill 53? I would be surprised if all three parties don't eventually support that. I think the argument about timing is kind of ridiculous. I mean, come on. Are we supposed to sit and twiddle our thumbs until we hit the election campaign, or do we still want to do some good things for the people of Ontario while we're here? I think it's obvious that they would rather just sit and twiddle their thumbs. Well, we're not going to. We still have more work to do. We've done some good things. We've built up a strong economy and we're trying to make sure now, as that economy is as strong as it has been in generations, that we don't leave anybody behind. That's why we have raised the minimum wage—something that Doug Ford wants to roll back. That's why we have invested in OHIP+ to ensure that pharmaceuticals are affordable for more Ontarians. That's why we've made investments in child care to ensure that all Ontarians can get out there in that workplace and participate and prosper on behalf of their families. That's why we brought in measures in Bill 148 to make workplaces fairer.

Not all these measures have been easy, Mr. Speaker; some have been challenging for the business community. But we want to make sure that we do not leave some Ontarians behind who are not able to participate in the prosperity we have built up.

I want to thank the member for Guelph for sharing her time with me. I want to thank the members in the Legislature for listening. I'm looking forward to continuing to build on a very strong economy in the months and years ahead.

1440

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for questions and comments, I will remind the members that we are debating second reading of Bill 53, An Act respecting the establishment of minimum government contract wages. That is really the discussion that we're supposed to be engaged in this afternoon.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to bring comment to Bill 6. I'm going to start off with the member for Scarborough Centre. He made a couple of comments, one of them being that this is creating tens of thousands of jobs. That's probably a good step, considering that they put 370,000 people out of work over the last few years because of their very poor and inconsistent policies that really don't allow people to have jobs.

He talked a little bit about the workplaces wanting to be fair. Well, I think he should come to the riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and talk to some of my small business owners and see how it's anything but fair how the government has been treating them for the last number of years. They're very concerned about how they are going to keep their people employed.

But, Mr. Speaker, out of respect for you, I'll return back to Bill 6 and the thoughts that we're having here today. I spoke at some length to this bill a while ago, but I want to just bring up some comments in regard to a letter I received from Heather Zettle, a probation and parole officer. She sent me a letter and said that she actually just found out that there are 80 funded but vacant probation officer positions within the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Mr. Speaker, that's very concerning for her because, again, you know that their workloads are getting larger and there's a very big challenge that they're facing. She suggests here:

"Our local federal parole officer carries a current caseload of approximately 20 offenders. The federal system has psychologists that complete assessments regarding risk etc. before those offenders are ever released. We don't have that option we are tasked with our own paperwork. We often supervise the same offenders—either prior to or after they are involved with the federal correctional system. So why are our caseloads well over double this number?"

When I spoke originally about this bill, a lot of it was administrative, a lot of it was technical and a lot of it really didn't touch base with the corrections officers out there. Certainly what our critic the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex was talking about is that they are actually very concerned about the working conditions, they're worried about their caseload and they're worried about their safety and the safety of the people that they are working with.

I'm concerned that this bill didn't really address the problem that correctional officers were bringing to the front lines.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This is a very important conversation that we're having. I do see the point of the member opposite on the government side saying, "Of course, the government has to continue to do business." That is important, but on this side, what we're asking is—these things are essentially prioritized by the government. We feel, on this side of the House, that it has been a long time before they prioritized this, 10 years since the report that was received in 2007.

Looking at why this is important, of course we need to make sure that we have a fair wage policy in place, so that when contractors bid on government jobs, the workers are getting paid fairly. We don't want to see workers getting paid below-market wages, and the private sector profiting off of that bid and not paying workers fairly.

Today, I actually made a statement on the day of mourning for injured workers. When you pay workers fairly, there are studies that show you have a better skill set for workers and, of course, less injuries because the training piece is there. There are all kinds of reasons why we need to make sure that we do have a fair wage policy in place when it comes to government jobs that are being bid on and that people are taking on, because we are a province where we believe that when you go to work every day, you should be getting paid a fair wage, you can survive on that fair wage and you're able to go home to your family without being hurt at work.

Like I said, there have been various studies showing that when you offer a fair wage, you get a higher calibre of skilled trades and you're actually more invested in your own business, so you are going to train your workforce to make sure that they stay with you and there's retention.

I'm glad that this bill is before us, but we do have valid questions. Did the government really prioritize this in a timely way before now? Because it is long overdue that we make sure that people are paid fairly for the work they do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to stand for two minutes and comment on the fair wage act. Speaker, I guess that it's relevant to exactly what it costs you to live in Ontario, what a fair wage is. If it costs you less to live in Ontario than in other provinces, then a fair wage may be lower or it may be higher, whatever it happens to be.

It's interesting that it costs so much to live in Ontario. We've seen since I have been here the 300% rise in hydro rates. It does cost more to live in Ontario because of that, and all of the scandals the government has been involved with: the gas plant scandal, Ornge, eHealth, and we heard of another one today. We're paying over a billion dollars now in interest on the debt. Wouldn't it be great if that billion dollars a month would go to health care or something like that?

I guess we need to have a fair wage. I think we all can agree on those types of things. But wouldn't it be great if we could have a fair wage that people could actually spend to live on in this province, without governments keeping on raising the cost of living in this province? That's what has been going on for just too many years. Good people who have been working hard all their lives are falling behind. We can see that with seniors. We can see that with many groups.

I think we have to put this into context. The cost to live in Ontario has gotten so exorbitant that this makes it more difficult to live here. So whether this fair wage act is fair, the way this government has been going, it may not be fair next year if they stay in power.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

M^{me} France Gélinas: C'était quand même assez intéressant d'écouter les commentaires au sujet du projet de loi 53, la Loi concernant la fixation de salaires minimums pour les marchés publics. Cette loi, vraiment, s'applique à trois types de travailleurs : les travailleurs de nettoyage des bâtiments, les travailleurs liés aux services de sécurité et ceux qui font la construction. En écoutant les membres du Parti libéral en parler, je vous dirais qu'on a fait plusieurs détours et qu'on ne s'est pas concentré directement sur ce que le projet de loi est.

La question qui demeure, et la question qui blesse, c'est vraiment d'avoir des salaires équitables. C'est quelque chose d'important pour tout le monde. Donc, d'avoir un projet de loi qui dit que les travailleurs de la construction qui s'occupent autant du nettoyage que de la sécurité soient payés un salaire raisonnable, c'est quelque chose de positif. Mais d'amener ce type de changement quand il ne reste que six jours à la session avant que l'élection soit déclarée, c'est un peu, je vous dirais, difficile à avaler.

C'est un projet de loi qui était là depuis 1995, et c'est une loi qui existe en Ontario depuis 1995. En 2008, on a eu un rapport qui nous disait qu'il faut mettre cette loi à jour. La loi ne rencontre plus les besoins pour lesquels elle avait été créée. On est maintenant rendu en 2018. On a eu un gros projet de loi du ministre du Travail en 2017, le projet de loi 148, dans lequel on aurait pu faire tous ces changements, mais qui n'ont pas été faits.

Donc, six jours avant la fin de la session, c'est difficile à croire que c'est quelque chose qu'ils considèrent d'important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. The member for Guelph can reply.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: We're just having a little chuckle over here with the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who was actually responding to the bill that I think we may be debating later this afternoon, rather than the bill that we're debating momentarily this afternoon. However, he did make a comment about jobs. I want to note that, in fact, since the recession we actually have created 850,000 net new jobs. As my colleague pointed out, it's that economic strength that means that we're

doing the infrastructure, which means we actually are doing a lot of government contracts. So it actually does all sort of wrap around.

Thank you also to the members from London-Fanshawe, Perth-Wellington and Nickel Belt. I want to come back to some of the remarks that the member for London-Fanshawe made, because I think at the heart of this, we are aligned with the NDP in terms of our attitude toward fair wages, that fair wages aren't a burden on the employer. A fair wage actually means that the employer attracts people with greater skill, with greater knowledge and with greater retention, with greater loyalty to the employer.

1450

We agree with the comment the member from London-Fanshawe made that this is not an imposition on the employer; this is to ensure that the good employers who pay fair wages are actually the employers who are getting the work, not the employer who doesn't pay fair wages and who doesn't have as great a skill level, as great a consistency in the workforce. We don't want them to get the work. We want the good employers who are fair to their employees to get the government work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 53, An Act respecting the establishment of minimum government contract wages. This bill proposes to basically set minimum government contract wage rates for construction workers and building service workers, such as cleaners, security etc.

As I mentioned a little bit earlier when I did my two-minute questions and comments, I think following the member from Guelph, I certainly join with my PC caucus colleagues and our leader, Doug Ford, in saying that we believe that everyone should earn a living wage in Ontario. But whether this bill will do much toward furthering that goal is actually difficult to tell.

As we've seen with many government bills before this one, there isn't a whole lot to debate here. All the heavy lifting, all the finer details are missing in action. They are to be determined through regulations and orders issued by the newly proposed director of government contract wages. I know my colleague from eastern Ontario, from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, hit on this point when he spoke earlier this afternoon. To me, this is again about bigger government, and we know that this government, over the last 15 years, has increased the size and cost of government for taxpayers.

The Ontario PCs believe that everyone should earn a living wage, and we are fighting directly for low-income people by putting even more money back into their pockets. I hit on this point earlier, that our leader, Doug Ford, announced that anyone making minimum wage shouldn't pay any provincial income tax in the province. I have long supported that. That's one way of putting money back in their pockets, upwards of \$1,000 per year.

On a personal level, I've taken an interest in rural and small-town poverty, which unfortunately seems to be all

too easy to ignore in Ontario, and I think it's ignored here at Queen's Park. But it's an important issue and it's one that my office has been hearing about more and more since my first election back in 2011.

Speaker, after hearing from a number of constituents, I decided to host a number of round tables in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex about a year ago, which included a broad spectrum of people and representatives and delegations from several municipalities, area First Nations, local religious and charitable organizations, area food banks, social services, government agencies and youth organizations.

I appreciated the opportunity to hear first-hand some of the successes and some of the challenges that we are facing in rural and small-town Ontario. It was great to have such strong participation and representation, but it also demonstrated how many people are being affected by this and the support network that has had to develop in our communities to try to help address the poverty issue.

The rise in the cost of living in Ontario has been a burden to absolutely everyone. We've heard it time and time again: Life has become unaffordable under this government, right across the board. Of course, Speaker, just before the election we're seeing the government introducing measures to help a few people to cope, another select few in the province to try to cope with the burden that this government has placed upon people.

I am truly discouraged to see the way the Liberals have chosen to play politics with the labour file. After being in power for 15 years, we're seeing this sudden, desperate blitz of labour reforms, and it raises real concerns about what kind of evaluation has gone into all of these measures. I, frankly, don't have confidence that much has been done to try to anticipate what all these reforms will do to our provincial economy, whether they will actually make a difference for the people they claim to help, and what impact they might have on the industries involved.

There is no question whether this is motivated by the election. Many of the changes in this bill could have been done by regulation, at the government's leisure. So this isn't about good public policy; this is about this government wanting to have a press conference and trying to turn this into a political issue. It's cynical, it's selfish and it's this sort of thing that has really turned people off of this government.

There's also the very interesting point my colleague from Dufferin-Caledon, the deputy leader of our caucus, raised about the necessity of this bill. This bill protects workers covered by government contracts—contracts this government itself reviews, signs and approves. If this government is so keen on this issue, why haven't they been ensuring the protection of wages on a contract-by-contract basis? That's a prerogative that has been available to them, Mr. Speaker. Not only is this something that could have been done by regulation, without the need for legislation; I think it's fair to say that this could have been implemented in practice.

Again, because of the way the government has gone about this, there is very little of substance to debate here

in front of us. Most of the impact of this legislation will come through regulations and orders issued by the new director of government contract wages. All of this will be done outside the legislative process.

Given this lack of transparency around where the bill will end up, I would like to address the lack of transparency that preceded the bill's introduction. I want to address the lack of consultation, important stakeholders being left out; for example, the Ontario General Contractors Association. In fact, they had no idea the legislation was coming before the government rolled it out on April 17, essentially a couple of weeks before the election. This is another problem for the Liberals, and we've all talked about it on a number of files. A lack of meaningful consultation just doesn't take place.

Over and over again, we hear from the people impacted by this government's policy choices, and we hear that they weren't invited to the table, that their voices have not been heard. Most often, it's the front-line people or the people who have to actually live with the government's decisions who get run over roughshod. We saw it with horse racing; we've seen it with doctors, with hydro ratepayers, with small businesses. At this point, I should really just have drafted up a standard spiel on lack of consultation, because it comes up over and over again with this government's policy-making. I know all MPPs hear this from individuals and stakeholders across the province.

I'm sure the government has had groups come in on their lobby days to discuss this issue over the years. I know I have, as I just mentioned. This is a policy that has been frozen for the entire 15-year tenure of this government, after all. But that's not the same as consultation. You don't get feedback on proposals when you're not bringing anything forward for stakeholders to evaluate. I imagine this lack of consultation is one of the main reasons, aside from the desperately timed rush to bring this forward, that there is no nuance to this actual piece of legislation.

When and why will these minimums rise? We don't know. How will these new, and as of yet unnumbered, enforcement officers be working to verify wages? Will privacy be protected? What is the enforcement mechanism? These are details, Mr. Speaker, that could have been fleshed out, could have been debated and reviewed if the government had taken the time to actually have meaningful consultation.

The Liberals like to talk about having conversations. It seems to be their favourite excuse to kick the can down the road. But at the end of the day, they just do whatever they want. They've demonstrated here yet again that they don't actually put any stock in consultations, because for this piece of legislation, they just didn't bother. And because they have introduced this so close to an election, there isn't even time for a fair or thorough debate in the House or for this legislation to be effectively reviewed or revised at committee.

1500

How are the people most affected by this legislation supposed to have confidence in a bill that's introduced

this way in the dying days of a desperate government? Well, Mr. Speaker, they don't have much confidence. Even those who support it in principle or who have lobbied for this type of legislation have voiced real concerns about how the government has gone about this.

In a recent *Globe and Mail* article, Wayne Peterson, executive director of the Construction Employers Coordinating Council of Ontario, was quoted as saying that the industry welcomes the legislation but that it's rather tardy. He also raised concerns about this bill being incomplete, saying, "It's fine to pass legislation, but if it has no enforcement and no teeth, then it's just frivolous legislation."

The same article also quoted David Frame, director of government relations at the Ontario General Contractors Association. As I mentioned earlier, that organization was caught totally off guard by the government's announcement about this legislation. They had put in their two cents a year ago, and since then it was radio silence.

I heard a very similar story from the building trades when I met with them a couple of months ago. They had been lobbying for changes for a long time but seemed to be met by total indifference from this government at the time.

Speaker, back to David Frame and the *Globe* article:

"'What surprises me is they don't need legislation,' he said about the updates. 'They have the (regulatory) authority to bring the schedules up to date.'"

"Frame said the association doesn't challenge the premise of the fair wage scale, but the skilled trades are so competitive at the moment that if a worker feels he or she isn't receiving fair compensation, they could find other more lucrative work in the field.

"'They're trying to make employers look like the bad guys, like we're not paying our workers properly,' he said."

So it certainly doesn't sound like the government got buy-in from stakeholders or worked with them in any way to strengthen this legislation.

One of the key things that this bill does is to create the position of director of government contract wages. The director, depending on circumstances, can set different minimum government contract wages. These wage-setting powers seem to be very discretionary, especially in the present absence of the further regulation which this bill calls for. So it's difficult to have a good debate about how appropriate or effective this director may actually be. Unfortunately, it also means that there is going to be a lot of uncertainty for employers and employees. What effect could this have on scope of practice, for example? Will decisions rendered by the director around work classification become precedent-setting? This director is going to be set up to oversee a wide variety of workers, doing different jobs in different parts of the province where labour costs and availability may range. It would be nice to know what these minimum wage levels are going to be reflective of. Will there be rises in the wage rates alongside inflation, or will this become a perennial political prerogative? There is no indication of when or

why wages would rise at this point. What relationship, if any, will this director have with the College of Trades? How will the unions be involved? There are collective agreements to consider. Will these have any bearing on the new minimum wage?

Speaker, I haven't heard anything from the government side, by way of analysis, on what impact this legislation may have more broadly on the industry. If this is legislation that they truly have had under consideration for quite a while, I would like to hear more evidence-based analysis and less pandering from the government side of the House.

The member from Windsor-Tecumseh has raised questions about the scope of this bill; for example, why it includes cleaners and security but not cafeteria workers. I don't think we've heard the rationale from the government about why they have chosen the scope that they have. What was their criteria for inclusion? I didn't see that criteria laid out anywhere. Would broadening that scope fall under the purview of the director or the minister?

It would also be nice to know, Mr. Speaker, if wages paid in the private sector will have any bearing on what will now be required in the public sector. As a general rule, we've seen bureaucrats and those on the government payroll get paid above-market rate, especially here in Ontario. We've certainly seen that with this government's six-million-dollar man, the CEO of Hydro One, who is getting paid 10 times what people get paid for the same job in other provinces.

In the private sector, wages can move up and down depending on market conditions and demand. How often will we see this minimum wage move? We also know how much longer contract negotiations in construction projects can take in the public sector. Will rate increases be broadcast ahead of time? How much transparency will there be around those decisions? At the end of the day, there's going to be a cost to this, a cost that will be borne by employers and taxpayers. Will there be any analysis by the government or this new directorate of what the impact of that cost will be? Has any analysis been done by the government to date?

The sudden hike in the minimum wage that was brought in by Bill 148 in the last session left economists throwing up their hands. No one knows what the impact of that sudden hike will be. I can tell you, though, Mr. Speaker, that that wage hike came into effect in January this year and Ontario saw over 50,000 jobs lost that month according to Statistics Canada.

Businesses were blindsided by that policy. Many are still struggling to find ways to deal with that radical change to their margins. One pizza shop owner I heard from says they make a 5% to 10% profit, and these changes to their labour costs were going to be about a 10% increase in costs. Small businesses are struggling to find a way to keep the doors open and meet the new financial demands this government has placed on them. For many, that means cutting employees' hours, not hiring additional staff, raising prices, shortening their

hours of operation or some combination of these types of measures. They didn't have notice, and they didn't have a say. They didn't get the time they needed to make absorbing these costs as painless as possible for their employees and customers.

Speaker, will we see the same thing happen here? Has the research been done? I'm not optimistic. We've seen what's happened in the past. This was, I think, a rush job two weeks before an election.

Just this morning, we saw another prime example of why we should all be skeptical when this government decides to fiddle with the economics of the private sector. This morning, the Financial Accountability Office released a long-awaited report on the business support programs administered by this Liberal government. The report found that over 100 such programs are currently being administered, which is about double the number of programs Don Drummond was able to identify in 2012. These programs represent approximately \$22.9 billion in grants, tax credits and loans handed out in just the last five years.

This morning's report examined 12 of these programs, including the massive Jobs and Prosperity Fund, to determine whether the programs had targets or performance measures and could show results. Shockingly, they found that only 25% of the programs collected relevant performance measures, and less than half had even established any targets or benchmarks. Most damning of all, no evidence was found at all to show that any of the programs had any direct effect.

Speaker, it has been years since the Drummond commission expert panel and the Auditor General each recommended the government begin evaluating the impact of their business support programs, and the Liberals have not done it. The FAO report confirmed that this morning. They're spending billions of dollars with no evidence that taxpayers are actually getting value for money. The lack of accountability and, frankly, competency is truly shocking.

This latest report drew on earlier work done by the Auditor General which found that most of the grant money awarded by the Liberal government went to the oldest, wealthiest corporations, and 80% of it was handed out by invitation only. Only 4% of the grant money handed out by this government went to small businesses, and the Auditor General's 2015 report, like today's FAO report, also concluded that the government did little to evaluate whether its support programs are even effective.

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So billions of dollars of taxpayers' money is essentially being thrown down a wishing well every year. The government hands over a cheque, takes a nice picture and then just hopes for the best. Essentially, the FAO has confirmed that this government doesn't care about getting results for taxpayers or effectively supporting Ontario's businesses. That is just the most recent example of the total lack of accountability we have seen from this government. Here we are, with the government again proposing measures that will take some sort of toll

on taxpayers' wallets, and we don't have any real data or analysis to go on, just wishes and hopes.

I can understand and support the principle of the legalisation, but for once it would be nice to see this government do its due diligence and bring a piece of legislation to this House that isn't half-baked.

Speaker, I know I have only a few seconds to wrap up.

But again, here we are, days before an election—I've been here for seven years. I know stakeholders have approached many of us over the years to deal with this issue. I believe it was the last PC government that dealt with this. Again, I just think it's very cynical that we have a government introducing this days before an election when they had 15 years to do that. I would say confidently that the stakeholders just don't trust what this government is doing. There are obviously a lot of questions that need to be answered.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to those comments from the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. We're talking about wages and fair wages.

At the beginning of his talk, he said Doug Ford and this new team of Doug Ford Conservatives believe that everyone should earn a living wage; he said that a couple of times. That is good news, because I'd like to tell you about a living wage.

I want to define a living wage as it was defined in the Living Wage in Durham Region report put out by Community Development Council Durham that was funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. This is in 2016.

"What is a living wage?

"A living wage is what workers need to earn in order to have a decent quality of life. It emerged from the realization that the minimum wage does not cover the cost of a decent life. In addition to food, clothing and shelter, quality-of-life measures are also sensitive to the type of social inclusion and community participation (i.e., recreation, family outings and one modest vacation per year) required to live a truly human life."

In Durham region, it was calculated as \$17 an hour for someone working 37.5 hours a week. The calculations are informed by the assumptions in the national living wage framework. I hope that Doug Ford and these new Conservatives are using that same framework, based on food, clothing and footwear, shelter, transportation, family and household expenses.

While we're at it, now that they support a living wage, I would like to share from Living Wage Canada that:

- in Chatham-Kent, it's \$15.86;
- Durham region, \$17 an hour;
- Grey-Bruce, \$16.76;
- Guelph-Wellington, \$16.50;
- Halton, \$17.05;
- Huron-Perth, \$16.47;
- Muskoka county, \$15.84;
- Toronto, \$18.52;
- London, \$15.53.

Wouldn't that be wonderful, if that's really what is being supported? If we're going to talk about living wages, let's really talk about what it means to live in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I listened intently to the comments of my colleague from the PC Party. I know him; he's a good guy. He just stood there and read all of the talking points dutifully. I know he didn't believe any of them, because many of them are simply not true. For example, the current PC scheme does nothing but take money out of the pockets of minimum wage earners.

Then he went on to criticize the sudden rise in the minimum wage, which was not sudden. Indeed, his party froze it at \$6.85 for eight years. It has gone up, I think, 11 times prior to the most recent rise and rose in response to many of the actions by neighbouring jurisdictions that have been more aggressive than Ontario in reforming the minimum wage.

Indeed, for minimum wage earners, your minimum wage today simply gets you back to where your parents, or perhaps you or your grandparents, would have been 40 years ago, in 1977. That's the purchasing power of your minimum wage today. I think somebody today should be able to live a life at least as good as their parents did.

On that minimum wage, the PC Party seems to feel that minimum wage earners shouldn't pay income tax, but if they do, their proposal would actually be inferior to what the province has already proposed. A minimum wage earner, under the proposals in the current Ontario budget, would end up \$1,100 better off with the government's plan. If one does it the way the opposition has proposed it, at most—and for most people it wouldn't be—it would be about \$850. Not a very good idea, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise and comment on the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex's comments. I listened very intently—I was actually over his shoulder—during the 20-minute dissertation as he gave of the outline of the bill. I listened very intently as he described a number of issues, whether it's the high hydro prices that are affecting people or our plan for no income tax for anyone earning less than \$30,000, which I think would be significant to a number of individuals in the province of Ontario, especially in my riding, and how to put more dollars back in people's pockets. He talked about the impact on small-town and rural Ontario, rural poverty, which is a fact that's being faced by many people, whether it's the increased regulations that are impacting small business, abattoirs having to close, high electricity prices or the Green Energy Act, which is impacting many people with the wind turbines that have been foisted and forced upon people in the province of Ontario by the NDP–Liberal alliance which forced the Green Energy Act onto the people of Ontario.

When I hear the NDP say that they're against the impacts that the wind turbines have on rural Ontario, they

have to stop and think that it was because of their party supporting the Liberals when they brought that in. We could have driven a stake through the heart of that Green Energy Act and it wouldn't be in place now, causing all the issues that it does cause.

I think the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, as he outlined a number of the issues, whether it was corporate welfare, as he called it, that there was no tracking of the impact of that—I think those are the issues that we will have to deal with, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you for the indulgence that you had for the member, who really talked about many other things that have been done worse under this Liberal government. I would like to give an example from my riding.

I'm the MPP for the beautiful villages of Foleyet and Ivanhoe Lake. Foleyet and Ivanhoe used to be serviced by Ontera. The government decided to—they called it “divest,” but it's a fancy word that means to sell Ontera. So now Internet and cell are provided by Bell. Bell has to renew its use of the tower, and they are saying, “No, the tower costs too much money. We are going to walk away.”

We told the government, when they sold Ontera and when they asked for the privatization of cell service and WiFi service in northern Ontario, that it would run into that type of problem. Now we are facing that problem, with Bell saying that nobody who doesn't already have WiFi can buy into WiFi, and now that they cannot afford to pay to rent space on that tower, they are just going to dismantle the whole thing.

This is 2018: How can businesses, tourist outfitters, people going to school, live without WiFi? Can you imagine what it would look like, Speaker, if you had to live your life in rural northern Ontario without WiFi, without cellphones?

We had a beautiful snowmobile season. You could go to Foleyet pretty much any weekend and there would be 20 snowmobiles parked in front of the restaurant. That was great, but all of those tourists expect their cellphones to work. If they were to go off the trail and need a little bit of help, the people from the village were more than happy to go and assist.

But we're threatened with losing all of this right now because Bell does not want to pay the price to maintain their use of the tower. We're going to lose it all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex can now reply.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the members from Oshawa, Mississauga–Streetsville, my good friend from Sarnia–Lambton, and Nickel Belt. Speaking of the member from Sarnia–Lambton, it's great to have a friend of ours here today, Lorne Given, who is visiting from Sarnia–Lambton today.

1520

Mr. Speaker, if we want to talk about affordability and helping people's standard of living in the province, let's look at what the Liberals have done in the last 15 years—and to be quite frank about it, the NDP supported the Liberals all the way along. Let's start with the tripling of hydro bills for the people in the province of Ontario. They worked together, the NDP and Liberals jointly again, and brought in the Green Energy Act. Every time we tried to stop building wind turbines and scrap the Green Energy Act, the NDP and Liberals always defeated PC initiatives.

Why don't we talk about the cap-and-trade carbon tax in the province? What did that do to the low-income people in this province? It added 4.5 cents per litre to every litre of gas they bought. What did it do to their natural gas bills? As of today, this year low-income families will pay \$80.50 every year for this cap-and-trade carbon tax. In 2020, that price is going to be \$336. That's what this government is doing—aided by the NDP—to low-income families in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, everything is going up in Ontario. I just asked a question a couple of weeks ago—almost half of the price of a case of beer now is taxed thanks to this Liberal government: 47% of a case of beer in Ontario is taxed. This government is so desperate that they're hurting families right across this province. Their decisions have hurt low income families more than others, not to mention again what this government is doing on the corporate side of things: some \$23 billion to private corporations by invitation only—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's always a pleasure to stand in this House and contribute to debates on bills that have come forward while we're here in the Legislature. It's a really pivotal time right now because, in the next few days—this week we will be here till Thursday, and then three days next week perhaps, and then we're gone into our respective ridings in order to start campaigning.

The timing of this legislation—I am all for discussion and I'm all for us understanding what the issues are and talking about how it's going to benefit Ontarians, but realistically we know that this will probably not see the light of day simply because there's just not enough time in the legislative calendar to go through this process.

I have to say that the government, a couple of years ago—the Minister of Labour decided to conduct a process of modernizing labour laws and policies. That's what they did. They said, "You know what? We are now going to be looking at our Employment Standards Act. We need to open this discussion up and start looking at how we can make life better for people because the wages that they're earning are really putting them in a state of poverty."

Many groups were very interested in this consultation process that started. One of them in particular was the Workers' Action Centre. A couple of things they talked about here—they said: "As the special advisors to the

Changing Workplaces Review note in their final report, contracting and outsourcing reduces costs and places employers in a position where they are not responsible for the indirect employment they create as they shift liability and cost to others. This creates competition among contractors, causing a downward pressure on workers' compensation while shifting responsibility for working conditions onto third parties. This contributes to increasingly precarious jobs."

This is what their own advisers said about the Changing Workplaces Review in their final report. It does speak to the fact that if you do not pay someone a market wage, a living wage, fair wages, you're going to have people in precarious employment. They're not going to be able to survive on the wages that someone is paying them. So it's important that we have these conversations and this legislation at this point, of course, to talk about—like I said earlier, it's not going to see the light of day. But there are many things that we bring forward that we start conversations and discussions around, and then hopefully, in the future, the government of the day will take those things on and understand that they are challenges that constituents throughout Ontario have come to their representatives to articulate and want change around.

The government of the day, the Minister of Labour, decided to take on this task and tour the province and look into this. The fair wage policies recognize the important role that the government can play as a model employer. As a government, we should be a model employer for the people and set the standard for the people of Ontario.

They prevent governments from using their significant market share and purchasing power to undercut local labour conditions. Fair wage policies enable governments to use their tendering policy to achieve broader policy objectives, for economic fairness for workers, health and safety, and positivity to impact our labour conditions.

That is a role, I think, of government, to make sure that they set the bar at marketplace wages. I know the Conservatives' leader—I shudder to say the name because honestly, some of the stuff that spews out from that person does not make any sense to me at all. They are bumper sticker slogan catchphrases, but there's no policy attached to them. They haven't released their policy. When somebody says they're going to give someone a living wage, their solution is, "We're going to lower taxes on that living wage." We've seen that if you do that, maybe you're going to get a tax break, but in the long run you're not further ahead. It sounds good but it's not going to help the people it mostly affects.

It's Change for the Better that we need, Speaker. I just saw one of my colleagues put this wonderful platform beside my seatmate. Change for the Better is what we need. When we talk about the fair wage policy, that is a good step. It is a good step forward.

Now, the consultation process under the Workers' Action Centre—they also commented on that. This probably won't come as a surprise to many of us here in the

House because the government has failed when it comes to consulting people properly in order to have effective legislation. Their implementation of legislation is also something to be desired. Many times they may have legislation and a concept that is a good idea, but then when they implement it, it doesn't actually work for the people of Ontario.

Another thing that they have said here, under the consultation process piece: "Instead, we have witnessed a process of invitation-only meetings to discuss narrow questions on the construction and building services that the fair wage policy has historically addressed. The fair wage policy consultation is not publically available on the Ministry of Labour website. It is not on the consultation calendar. It does not meet the principles of the ministry's engagement framework, a framework that calls for authentic engagement and inclusivity and balance. On the employee side, beyond the unions that were rightfully invited, there was no representation of non-unionized workers from construction and building services who would be affected by a fair wage policy in these sectors, much less non-unionized workers impacted by government contracting."

It talks to the point again, Speaker, that they didn't consult the people it affects except for the ones they rightfully should have called. They need to go beyond that because besides people who are unionized, there are non-unionized workers out there and they need to be protected and they need to have their voices heard so that they can talk about what it looks like to have a fair wage policy in this province when they are on the job.

Then they went on to talk about and they've addressed—it's very interesting. This report talks to the bill and what isn't in the bill or what's lacking or the shortfalls of what happened when they crafted this legislation. The action centre again talks about the administration and enforcement. They said here, "A fair wage policy will do little to level the playing field, stop the downward spiral in wages and working conditions in government-contracted work, and ensure decent wages and working conditions if it is not enforced."

1530

So we can have all the legislation in this province, and if we don't have measures to enforce that legislation, to ensure that it's working the way that it's intended, then it's not effective and it's really an exercise in futility.

I have to refer to the Financial Accountability Office report that just came out today. When you look at the chart that the Financial Accountability Office used to measure efficacy when it comes to legislation or, in this case, some programs the government has, they failed.

I look at this report from the Workers' Action Centre, and they're saying that if you don't have enforcement, it's not going to work. So that's another problem with this government and the way they manage even legislation in this House, Speaker.

Lastly, they talked about administration. They said:

"There must be a dedicated 'office' or program under the Ministry of Labour to administer the fair wage policy.

This office should have delegated authority, preferably under legislation, to:

—establish fair wage schedules

—review all procurement calls to determine applicable fair wage schedules which become a requirement for procurement."

If you don't have someone overlooking it, Speaker, then it's really just another exercise in legislation that isn't going to work for the people that it's meant to work for. So that is another piece when we're talking about administration.

This government has failed a lot of times, like I had mentioned before, to actually implement legislation to make it work. Going back to the FAO, when I look at this, they rated three categories. One of them was their program set-up. They have different service sectors that they funded.

One of the pieces they want to know is if the government had performance measures that aligned with objectives of where they were funding the job creation piece. In some cases, there was partial alignment; in some cases, there was no alignment. In this particular one, chart 5-2, only two of the businesses in this chart were actually aligned with the objectives.

The next portion of the chart says, "Does program have benchmarks or targets?" Speaker, again, five had only partial alignment with the benchmarks, and seven did not.

But here is the most interesting piece, and this is why, when you talk about administration and enforcement—this is what you end up getting at the end of implementation: You get outcomes. So, in the last piece of the chart from the FAO, they want to know if there is "Evidence that support provided led to observed results." So did the funding create the results that the benchmark set and did the business align with the objectives of the program? Speaker, 12 noes. I had to recount that because—whoa, 12 noes. There are actually 12 businesses that they funded, and each one had a "no" with respect to "Evidence that support provided led to observed results."

How can that be? I don't know if anybody—I see one of the members across the way is looking kind of confused, but that's what the chart says. It's shocking that in today's world a government doesn't have best practices, checks and balances when they, first, write legislation and, second, provide funding to sectors. How is that even possible in today's business world or in today's government? It makes people question things that they bring forward, like we're questioning the legislation today.

So that was what the Workers' Action Centre had talked about, the pieces that I mentioned. The last one they talked about, of course, was enforcement: "The enforcement program should be staffed without reducing capacity for employment standards and health and safety enforcement." Again, when we're creating legislation, there has to be a plan of how to implement it so that it works properly, and if it doesn't work, about how we make it work. Is it an enforcement piece? Is it a

consultation piece with the sector to get it up and running properly so that it can be effective?

We spend a lot of time—and I'm sure the government spends a lot of time—on research, on talking to stakeholders, on talking to people that it actually will change their lives when it comes to legislation. I know we did when we did our platform, because at every debate I've gone to—and I've gone to three in this area with regard to my critic role—we received the questions ahead of time to answer, and I can fully answer each inquiry. It makes me feel very proud that our platform is talking to the concerns of what people are asking us today.

In this case, when the government and the Minister of Labour went out and decided to do a full review on the Employment Standards Act, I think they were trying to address the concerns of the labour market and wages. But I don't think this particular bill, which they have separated from the review that they did, is going to work in the way that they say it is going to work for the people of Ontario.

I've just got to make sure I'm on the right time here.

The other thing that I also looked up in here was “reprisal prohibited.” That's always very important when you have legislation and it's not working, especially in a workplace. If someone says, “What's going on in here? Where is the process to complain? How do I get this wrong corrected?” there has to be a process in place for that to happen. Part of that is that for the person who is stepping forward with their concerns, if they're legitimate concerns—we don't want things to tie up the system when there aren't proper complaints—there is this reprisal prohibited so that an employer cannot take action against the person who is complaining. That's good. But, again, does it work just in theory, or does it work in practice?

Those were just some of my concerns with regard to the fair wage policy. It is something we need to have a discussion around. Like I said, I don't think it's going to go anywhere at this late date, but we have to start talking about these things because we have to make wages fair. When you have a job that you put out to bid and then someone wins that bid, if they're going to put it on the backs of workers where they're going to pay them less so they can get more profit, it doesn't work on any level. It's something we need to make sure we talk about.

I'm going to share my time with the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane because it is—

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Time, yes; I've got a little time constraint here. I wish I could hear the questions and comments on my debate. I'm going to pass it over to the member here from Timiskaming-Cochrane to finish it off. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you to the member from London-Fanshawe for her remarks on Bill 53—I'm just looking for the proper title—An Act respecting the establishment of minimum government contract wages.

I think, for a lot of people—just in the short time and in my response for her questions and comments—most people would assume that when a government passes legislation increasing the minimum wage, which we are fully in favour of, that would transfer through to employees who work for the government. But that's not necessarily so when companies apply for government contracts.

In my short minute: We have had cases in the north where—and I'll give you an example—companies have made firewood contracts to supply firewood to provincial parks. They bid on these contracts before the legislation. Now they have to pay their employees more, but the government was unwilling to renegotiate the contract. You would think that the government would be the first people up to the plate to make sure that people are paid fairly.

We are in favour of this legislation, but we question whether it's actually the government's intent, because several times—and the member from Timmins-James Bay has specifically brought up this issue several times. It wasn't an easy fix. This legislation is also that—just because the minimum wage is up doesn't mean that people who work indirectly for the government are being paid that wage.

1540

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Questions and comments?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: It's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge and add a few moments to a debate, especially in response to the members from London-Fanshawe and Timiskaming-Cochrane.

I want to say hello to Don, who's watching this afternoon in Cambridge.

Speaker, I'm very happy that I'm able to add a few comments to Bill 53, the Government Contract Wages Act.

We're taking action in this government so that employers won't be able to win a competition by unfairly lowering workers' wages. That's really the key piece of this bill.

We know that we in Ontario are leading the G7 in economic growth. Ontario's economy is strong and continuing to grow. Unemployment in Ontario is the lowest it has been in nearly two decades, and we want to continue that trend. But while businesses are expanding and creating wealth, not everyone feels the effects of that growth. It's one of the reasons why we brought in Bill 148. The basic premise of that is to ensure that the general minimum wage is increased—and other benefits. But we also needed to bring in Bill 53 to ensure that our workers' wages on government contracts are protected.

This legislation enshrines the principle of a fair prevailing wage into law and provides the necessary support enforcement to make it work. It's fair. It's the right thing to do.

On this side of the House, we want to ensure that just because the nature of our workplaces has changed, so too

have the government's procurement practices. We continue to make sure that we have a fair wage policy and that it's updated every so often to accommodate everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to add my voice to the debate today on Bill 53, the Government Contract Wages Act, because we have to make sure that the people listening and watching today understand what this bill really represents.

The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane questioned the intent behind this bill, and we do, too, in the PC Party of Ontario. Two weeks out from an election, it's very clear that the government is very desperately trying to attract any support that they can cling to. It's very evident in this bill.

Once again, if you were to take a good look at Bill 53, as the member from London-Fanshawe pointed out, it's lacking checks and balances in terms of the manner in which it has been written. Time and again, over the last number of years sitting in opposition, we've gone to committee and we have seen legislation that has been rushed and poorly written. Actually, this legislation I just referenced is typically a result of lack of consultation, as well. Then, when it comes to committee, stakeholders are jumping up and down, furious that they weren't consulted. They're pointing at the mistakes within the legislation. And then what happens? We see the government of the day showing how ill prepared they have been, because they bring in hundreds of amendments to their own legislation, to clean up the rushed mess that they made in introducing a piece of legislation. Bill 53 is no different.

When we talk about fair wages—I visited a school almost a year ago in Port Elgin. The students hit it right on the head. Do you know what's fair? What's fair is them having a chance to have a summer job. When wages are absolutely mismanaged—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Today I came in early and had breakfast downstairs. Lucas made me a couple of nice pieces of toast. I had coffee. At lunchtime, I went down and Vlad made me a nice hamburger. Jackie was busy over there.

I just went to the Speaker's retirement reception. Speaker Levac, as you know, is retiring. All of the servers who were there—Judy, Leo and all the others—were wearing these little black moustaches just to show their respect for Speaker Levac. As a matter of fact, the former longest-serving federal Speaker, Peter Milliken, was there as well.

It drove home to me the fact that when the Liberals drafted this bill, they talked about the men and women who work under government contracts and government projects. Then they talked about the people who work under government roofs, if you will, inside government buildings, which included the cleaners, but they forgot

entirely about the men and women who work as kitchen staff, who prepare the food, wash the dishes and serve food at the receptions. They should have been included. In fact, in my opinion, they should have been up there in front of the contractors. I know that the labour minister has told me, "Yeah, that was an oversight; we hope to correct it," but I haven't seen anything come forward yet on that.

I know that we've got to get it to committee, but we can also have somebody stand up on the Liberal side and say, "I will bring this up at committee. You are absolutely right. We didn't need to overlook that one classification of people that we have the most to deal with on a daily basis." These are the people we interact with on a daily basis, and they should be looked after. Thank you for your time, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: To the member from Windsor-Tecumseh: I agree with you totally. I do. I was going to say that anyway, before you tried to coax me into doing it. I'm glad to hear the support from the other side. I understand the criticism, "We want you to do more." That's not unusual. There is an ability inside the bill, even when it gets past committee, to expand the scope of it.

I think it's important. We've had fair wage policies since 1930 in this province. The last time we updated that was in 1995, and I bet I know who did it. A lot has happened in the last 23 years. Government agencies are bigger; there are more of them. The nature of work has changed. I'll say again: I agree with the member from Windsor-Tecumseh. I think they should be there, and I'll bring that forward.

I do want to address something that the member from Huron-Bruce said. She said, "What is fair?" What is fair to me is that someone who works full-time in this province shouldn't have to go to a food bank. And that's the situation we find ourselves in.

On the other side, I hear a lot about affordability, and then I hear their leader saying, "I'm going to end rent control." Do you know what that means to families in my riding? That means a lot to families in my riding. Rent control has been in this province for years. It has benefited families and kept housing affordable. So if you want to talk about affordability, let's talk about rent control and then let's talk about the minimum wage, because your leader has said he is going to stop the further increase in the minimum wage and he's going to give a tax break that will end up costing those people \$400 a year more at the end of the day.

At the moment, you guys aren't doing anything for affordability. You don't have a plan. I know you're slowly re-rolling out the People's Guarantee, but you haven't told us how you're going to pay for all those things you're saying.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes questions and comments. We return to the

member for Timiskaming–Cochrane for his two-minute response.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. It's been interesting to listen to the questions and comments and the debates on the 15-year-old government and the people who perceive themselves as the government in waiting, but they don't have a plan so we don't know what they're waiting for.

One thing I'd like to go back to the government on and the Minister of Transportation commented: The government, on winter road maintenance, nickel-and-dime the contractors. They know the contractors have to underbid to get the contract. They know that, yet they proceed, and as a result, the standards aren't met. They're doing the same thing here.

Once again, as opposed to the Tories, we fully believe that people should be paid \$15 an hour as a start to a living wage. People work hard; they should be paid for that, right? But the government knowingly nickels-and-dimes contracts and knowingly knows that these people aren't going to be paid, like the people cutting firewood in Timmins right now—they know that the contract cannot afford to pay the wage legislated. It's for a government contract, and yet they go ahead anyway and then they come out with this.

1550

A director of government contract wages may be appointed, yet they know that people are being underpaid because they're forcing contractors and they are promoting privatization because they believe that privatization is more efficient. We totally disagree. But both sides—at least the Conservatives are honest about it. They think that privatization is the end-all to everything, and we totally disagree. The Liberals believe the same thing; they just act like they don't.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or his designate specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No further debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES TRANSFORMATION ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LA TRANSFORMATION DES SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS

Mrs. Albanese on behalf of Mrs. Lalonde, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to enact the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services Act, 2018 and the

Correctional Services and Reintegration Act, 2018, to make related amendments to other Acts, to repeal an Act and to revoke a regulation / Projet de loi 6, Loi édictant la Loi de 2018 sur le ministère de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels et la Loi de 2018 sur les services correctionnels et la réinsertion sociale, apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois et abrogeant une loi et un règlement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mrs. Albanese has moved third reading of Bill 6. Further debate?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: A legislative traffic jam, Speaker. That is what it was. That's okay, though.

Speaker, as always, it's an honour to speak in this House and to join the debate on third reading of Bill 6, the Correctional Services Transformation Act. Before I begin my remarks, I'd like to start off by saying I think the most important component of this bill is thanking those who work in our corrections and community safety services in our communities, those corrections officers who are in provincially run facilities today and our probation and parole officers who are out in our communities keeping us safe each and every day. I want to thank them and give them a shout-out, because this is what this bill is all about.

We are thankful and honoured to have a couple of them in our midst today, among us. I'd like to welcome Chris Podolinsky from Windsor, and Christine Beintema and her son, Ryan Beintema, who are here taking part and watching democracy in process. They are both probation and parole officers, and we thank them for the work they do.

I've had the privilege over my tenure as corrections and community safety critic for the NDP to meet with probation and parole officers and to listen to their stories, to hear their concerns and to hear their ideas. It's often been said, and I'm going to quote Chris Jackel from the OPSEU corrections division, that those who are closest to the problem are often those who are closest to the solution. My goodness, there is no question that that is the case when it comes to reforms within our corrections system, because they know it. They work it, they feel it, they breathe it and they live it.

It is our obligation in this House to listen to them, and when we do devise legislation, we've got to get it right. We've got to do the right thing. The solutions—

Mr. Ted McMeekin: It's never the wrong time for the right thing.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's never the wrong time for the right thing, my honourable colleague the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale. It would be right to cut that in half, actually—that name of that riding. But he is correct; it's never too late to do the right thing, and as we are in the waning days of this government and this sitting of this House, I hope that this gets us further ahead towards the right thing.

We do have some concerns as the opposition, as you would expect. I'll try to outline those today. Speaker, in Bill 6, the impetus for the bill was born out of the independent adviser's report on corrections reform, more informally known as the Sapers report, which studied the issues within our corrections system and attempted to provide the government with some remedies and some ideas around what, in fact, the issues were and how we could solve them. It's a comprehensive report and we certainly acknowledge, support and thank Justice Sapers for his work on this file and the manner in which it was compiled. He took a lot of time to work out the nuances and to discuss the issues with those on the front line, those within the bureaucracy, and the families and affected communities.

We understand that, but also, Speaker, much of this was born out of, frankly, the negligence that we've seen from this government on this file over the last 15 years. What does that mean in our communities? Well, I'll tell you what it means. It means the highest recidivism rate in our provincial correctional facilities in the country, in Confederation. It means we have more people walking in and out of our facilities, in and out of our jails, than—

Interjection: We have more people.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We have more people—on a per capita basis. It's a ratio.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Do the math.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Do the math—more people going through, as a ratio, than any other place in the country.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Not a record to be proud of.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Not a record to be proud of; one to be ashamed of. If this government could feel shame, I would hope it would express that.

I don't believe that this bill is an expression of that, however, Speaker. I think this is a bill that attempts to do the bare minimum, to tell you the truth. Why? Because this bill has all the right language, evokes the right sentiments, but it doesn't have the resources that we need to see that will actually enable the mechanisms to make the system better and stronger.

Isn't that always the case with this government? We see them saying the right things, but when it's time to put your money where your mouth is, look out: The cupboards are bare. I don't think that should come as a surprise to anyone in this House or anyone tuning in to this today.

Speaker, New Democrats believe there's a better way. We believe there's a better way and there's a better choice, and it's Change for the Better. Is that a prop if I hold that up? Maybe it is. I don't know. Maybe it is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): If you're asking me if it's a prop, yes it is. You're not allowed to use props.

The member for Essex has the floor.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thanks for that clarification, Mr. Speaker. I then ask you to strike that prop from the record.

We do have a plan. New Democrats understand that the money that is invested on the part of the government

upfront in our communities to hire the professionals whom we see, like Chris and Christine, who are doing that work in our communities, that have—here's another great record for the government to hold up. We have a higher caseload for probation and parole officers than anywhere else in the country.

My notes from our researchers—they are brilliant and I love them and they help us out tremendously—say that probation and parole officers on any given day can have caseloads on average of 50 per PPO officer. Speaker, I think it's more like 80. I think it's a little bit heavier than that. And if you talk to them and you take the time to meet them, they'll tell you that not only is it a heavy caseload, but each individual case that they have jurisdiction over, that they are charged to guard, takes an enormous amount of effort and bureaucratic bureaucracy. What is a better word than that?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Red tape.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Red tape; blockades—and that doesn't alleviate the rate of recidivism and the fact that people are simply recycling through our criminal justice system and through our appeal system. That doesn't help.

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We've got sex offenders in our communities who require—again, these folks are charged with maintaining a level of oversight and accountability with registered sex offenders, but they are so understaffed and overworked that sometimes they're not able to perform their duties how they would like and need to. What does that mean? Getting back to my previous point, Speaker, when you invest in front-line services in our corrections and community safety, probation and parole, you lower that rate. You're able to eliminate that level of recidivism. You're able to give them proper oversight and accountability, and ultimately you make our communities safer.

New Democrats have a plan in this book that is on my table here that calls for a government—our government, the next government—to invest in hiring an additional 300 probation and parole officers immediately to alleviate and eliminate the bureaucratic red tape that exists, and to give them the resources and the support they need in our communities. That makes us all safer.

There's an exercise where if we spend some money, we're going to save a whole lot of money, because we know it's a whole lot more expensive to house somebody in a jail on a daily basis than it is to keep them in the community, get them into programming, access the services that could help them retrain as a productive person in society, and also avoid their getting into trouble ever again. That's the job. It's an important job. It requires an investment and it requires a government that believes in that investment. I can tell you that New Democrats believe that. I can tell you that Liberals have neglected that. I don't think we're going to come anywhere close to seeing that type of investment from any Conservative platform coming out because this is a public service. They're not into public services. And that's okay; I understand. They don't believe that public services are essential, making them as an investment.

They call them “costs.” These aren’t costs, Speaker; these are vital services, integral services that maintain a level of civility and civil cohesion that I think we are duty-bound to fulfill and obligated to maintain.

Speaker, this bill, of course, addresses some of the issues—the institutional issues, literally—that exist within our provincial corrections facilities. As New Democrats, we have long known that our system is in crisis—again to give a shout-out to our front-line corrections officers and their families, who go to work every day hoping that they aren’t assaulted, but not knowing if they might be.

We just had our National Day of Mourning. I want to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, who brought forward a bill that passed and called on all provincial and municipal—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Buildings.

Mr. Taras Natyshak:—buildings to lower their flags to half-mast—

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you—to honour those we’ve lost on the job.

This really comes down to a question around health and safety. Just yesterday, I believe, two COs were assaulted at the Toronto South Detention Centre—violently assaulted. In what universe does that make sense, that anybody should go to work and have any chance or risk of being harmed or injured or assaulted? I think there’s this pervasive idea that because you’re in corrections or community safety or policing or firefighting or are a paramedic, those risks are inherent in your job and perhaps you should just take a few licks once in a while. Not a chance, Speaker. We can do better. We must do better. It is our obligation to do that.

We know the keys that unlock a safer workplace for those on our front lines. The keys are pretty simple. It’s an investment. It’s money. It’s cash. Invest; put those investments into the facilities that are antiquated 100-year-old facilities that don’t have the physical space to ensure the logistics within a facility. It’s an investment in those technologies that allow for inspection and to do proper screening in search of potential contraband entering facilities. It’s an investment in the human resources that guard our jails. It’s an investment in the programming within those facilities to address the crisis in mental health and opioids and addiction.

There’s no other way. We don’t see another way. I think, actually, the other way that I’ve heard of—the Liberals have taken a *laissez-faire* approach. « *Laissez-faire* » en français, ça veut dire « Do nothing. Don’t do anything. Do the bare minimum. » Oui, ça veut dire *laissez-faire*. In English, they say “lay-zay” faire. That doesn’t actually make any sense to me in English.

In Conservative land, their idea is, “Let’s get into some aspects of privatization. Maybe the big private companies can help us out.” We’ve seen that movie before in this province. The PCs attempted to privatize our provincial facilities. It didn’t work out too well. They tried to turn that into a money-maker. Corners were cut

and front-line officers suffered. Somebody made a whole big whack of money, but we got the picture very clearly that this wasn’t a system that you could privatize or should privatize or ever even consider. I would sound that alarm to anybody who is concerned about public safety and our corrections system, because that’s their idea.

Speaker, our idea is to be honest with the people of Ontario and to inform them about the important nature of our system, because unless you’re involved in corrections and community safety—unfortunately, if you’re involved on a personal level, you don’t understand how it works. You don’t really give it a thought on a daily basis. Maybe that’s a good thing, you know? But we hope that someone is giving a thought. We hope that those folks that are working in those facilities guarding us from our worst nightmares every day—we hope that they’re well resourced and that they’re supported and they’re in their jobs. But that takes investment, something we don’t see in Bill 6.

Back to health and safety: It has been often said that in the realm of industrial or workplace health and safety, the most important thing to come up from a mine is the miner. Every person who goes to work every day should know and feel confident and be assured not only that the workplace is safe but that the laws that govern those workplaces are adequate. We’ve learned more over the last couple of years about how unsafe our facilities are because of the bravery and the vulnerability of the folks that work on the front-line.

Let me tell you what that means, Speaker. It means them standing in front of cameras, doing interviews, standing out front of facilities talking to their local media, talking to their neighbours about the challenges that they face every day going to work. It means them putting their faces, and their identities, in some cases, which—imagine. You’re interacting with some of the most violent elements of our society, criminal elements, and in your private life, you want to maintain some privacy. But because we need to hear that story, COs and probation and parole officers as well have told us what they’ve encountered. What does it mean? Well, it means walking into work, being jumped, being sucker-punched, having bodily fluids thrown on you, being physically assaulted, being verbally assaulted, emotionally assaulted, having to watch inmate-on-inmate violence occur without any resources to stop that. It means interacting with people that you know shouldn’t be in there because they have mental health issues. That’s what these facilities have become.

Years ago, the government of the day thought it would be a good initiative to end the practice of—I don’t want to say “warehousing”; I want to say “institutionalizing” folks with mental health issues. That certainly was a good endeavour. But all they’ve done, because they haven’t added the resources into our communities around mental health supports and addiction supports, is transferred that from mental health institutions to our corrections institutions. It has just been a shift. You can

almost call it a shell game. They applied the same rationale as well: Do the bare minimum, hope that things work out for the best, and folks will hopefully learn their lesson.

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This is a circular issue. If they don't have the supports on the front end around mental health and addiction, supports around learning and all these socio-economic metrics that you could apply to anyone who would find themselves in our criminal justice system—it's pretty easy to track that back to how they get there in the first place. If you don't have those in place, then they find themselves through the criminal justice system, and then into our penal system, then out—because the vast majority of those in our provincial facilities will be out two years less a day and back into our communities. Then it's their responsibility.

It's hard to do a job, Speaker, when you don't have the right tools. I worked in construction for 10 years. You can't do the job if you don't have the right tools. This is what this government is essentially saying: "Here's a tool box. It's empty. We want you to carry it around and make it look like you have the right tools." But when you go to open it up, that tool box does not carry the appropriate resources.

What is required? Well, it's required for us, as legislators, to be honest about the situation. We have to be honest about the resources that we're giving. What does that mean?

Well, of course, in this bill we see that the use of segregation has been reformed, and New Democrats believe that is important. They have been brought into line with international standards, where an inmate can no longer be placed into segregation or alternative—what's the word they used? They changed the word "segregation." I can't find it.

Interjection: Isolation.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Alternative isolation—I'm not even sure—for more than 15 days.

That, again, is born out of the horrific conditions that we heard of around Adam Capay spending nearly four years of his life in solitary confinement without any reporting, without anyone knowing, other than those who were in the institution. Finally, the alarm bells were sounded and the minister was forced to address this issue.

We support the reforms around segregation. We support the reforms around mental health intervention within these facilities. But we're not sure that the government has attached the appropriate resources—again, back to money—because we don't see it in this bill. We hope that it has—something New Democrats have promoted and put forward, actually, within a committee that just happened last week. I sat on that committee. We saw, I think, over 114 amendments tabled on the part of the government on a time allocation bill. The committee was time-allocated. This is the standard operating procedure for this government: Ram a bill through with time allocation, then throw in a whole whack of amendments that don't really allow for a thoughtful level of oversight

or inspection. This is last-minute stuff. You look sophomoric putting this together. It doesn't look like you've done your due diligence. It's not even respectful of the Sapers report, to have you table a bill and then table 114 amendments at the last minute. It does this place an injustice and those whom this bill is supposed to serve an injustice. You should be ashamed of yourselves for not taking the process seriously and collaborating with members of the opposition, who have good ideas, like the one I presented at committee that would call on this provincial government to end the process of housing immigration detainees. That isn't our job. It shouldn't be our job. When we have capacity issues within our provincial facilities, you've turned it into a money-making venture where the federal government is essentially paying you to warehouse or to hold immigration detainees. Let them do it. Let Justin Trudeau do it. They're adults, I think, at the federal level—I hope. The Minister of Energy sat there. He knows all those folks. We would think they could handle it, but no, it comes down to our provincial system to hold immigration detainees. It's federal jurisdiction.

So one common-sense idea that New Democrats proposed that could have made this bill stronger was voted down with lightning speed at committee, with not a chance that it was going to see the light of day. But I think those in our communities and those who are involved in this universe, our corrections universe, understand that's a positive step forward that we have to take, that we need to take. It's a measure of fairness and justice, and one that is economical as well, one that makes sense for us, because we need that physical space.

Those who are in our facilities need to know they can work at that facility appropriately. Again, they're at a loss when it comes to the tools they have within our facilities. It's getting harder and harder for them to perform their job adequately and in a safe way, with the constraints the government has put on them and without the adequate resources.

We've seen their stories of body scanners being put into facilities. It's some pretty interesting technology; you walk through it and can see if the person has anything in their cavity. I'd rather have to use that machine than have to do it the old-school way, and believe me, those corrections officers don't want to be doing that every day, but they have to. It's a tool that they use to ensure the protection of themselves and the other inmates. But those body scanners come into a facility and first of all, they were put in and not made operational, in some cases, for up to a year, and then the training that was finally provided was a day and a half's worth of training. You're talking about pretty comprehensive digital imaging that, if not done adequately and not properly resourced and staffed, is a complete waste and contributes to making our facilities more vulnerable.

Speaker, I think there are a lot of gaps that continue to exist. I don't know why this government is reluctant to make a full charge effort to fixing this system, because it has so many benefits if we'd get it right in our commun-

ities. It can make our communities safer. There's no question. It can make our communities healthier, absolutely, and it can actually make our communities more prosperous. New Democrats see that investment as a government prioritizing a public service that is fundamental to the safe and civil cohesion of our communities.

That isn't what I believe this government's priority is or has been. I think that at this moment, on April 30, 2018, their motivation is self-preservation. They are doing whatever they can, wherever they can, to try to maintain their grip on power on this province. Unfortunately, we have 15 years of track record to point to, to show them why they don't deserve it any longer, and one of them is in our corrections and community safety and probation and parole communities, where we've been under-resourced and undervalued.

I'll end with this, Speaker. I came into this debate on the heels of the previous debate, government contract wages where the government now has decided that should it contract with private agencies, it would ensure that those persons' wages weren't the deciding factor around whether the bid was awarded or not. I think that's a good thing. A fair wage is something that is just and fair, and if we can't do that at least, what type of a society are we living in?

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I'll end with this: Those who work in our facilities are professionals. They're dedicated. They put their hearts and souls on the line. Their families often pay the price for the stress and anxiety and trauma that they see. They deserve our respect, but they also deserve us, as a House, valuing the work they do.

As the old-time labour activist I consider myself to be at the weary age of 40, I would say that cheap work isn't skilled and skilled work isn't cheap. We have to make sure that we support those skilled professionals who work in our communities every day and ensure that their paycheques reflect not only our support and recognition, but our dedication to the work they do. I want to thank them for the work they do every day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: It's my honour to lead the government side for the third reading debate of the Correctional Services Transformation Act, 2018. This proposed legislation is the foundation for the transformation and modernization of correctional services in Ontario. Our government's vision is clear: to make Ontario a national and international leader in correctional services.

We are also determined to make our communities safer while putting fewer people behind bars. Large-scale reform within our correctional system is just one part of a much bigger picture.

As was said during the second reading debate on this bill, the correctional transformation begins by building a province and a justice system that makes sure that those in Ontario who need help will get the help they need, and that those caught up in the criminal justice system are diverted away from our institutions whenever possible.

To this end, our government is committed to addressing underlying social needs and investing in social infrastructure to keep people from becoming involved with the criminal justice system in the first place. The 2018 budget invests heavily in innovative poverty reduction initiatives, the health care system and supportive housing, as well as the justice system.

At the same time, we have recognized the immediate and pressing needs of those who are incarcerated—people who are in our institutions right now. These citizens cannot wait while we build the social infrastructure that may have kept them from being incarcerated in the first place.

Our 2018 budget also contains the largest new investment in correctional services in generations, which I'm going to get into shortly. We have heard too many times, particularly from members of the opposition party, "Lock them up and throw away the key." At the provincial level, where the longest sentence is two years less a day, that is absurd, these kinds of statements. The minister is not for throwing anything away, especially a life that, under the right conditions, has a chance to be rehabilitated.

I'm here, Mr. Speaker, to share with you what we're trying to do as a government: to make a difference. We need a key that will unlock the potential of those who are caught up in the criminal justice system, serving sentences in our communities and institutions, and return them back to their neighbourhoods and homes as contributing members of society. There's an old correctional phrase: "Treat a person as they are and they will stay that way. Treat them as they could be and they will become that person."

This proposed legislation, if passed, is based on the cornerstones of safety, human rights, dignity and the strength of our correctional services family. Correctional staff, including our correctional officers, probation officers and parole officers, are an essential part of the work under way to transform our correctional systems. I want to thank our correctional staff, some of whom I spoke about in second reading debate. I also wanted to say to each one of you, thank you, thank you, thank you for what you do every day to keep our communities safe but also to keep our facilities safe.

I know that they play an important role to keep our institutions safe, but more importantly, it's the support and encouragement they provided in this third reading debate but also throughout the whole process. I know they have contributed. We also want to continue to work with them to ensure an effective, responsive correctional system. Discussion with our front-line staff is important. With their local representatives, they have visited us at Queen's Park, along with our community stakeholders, telling us that we need to do things differently. We need to take the steps required to get this change right.

The Correctional Services Transformation Act is a major step toward making the right changes, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by telling this House about our professional correctional services staff. They have the

dedication, commitment and capability to deliver these changes, and these changes are now beginning.

Those who arrive at our institutions or are under community supervision often face complex social issues, including physical and mental health challenges, addictions, homelessness and unemployment. Our goal is not only to improve the supports within corrections, but also to help people avoid repeated involvement with the justice system.

This will be accomplished by building a corrections system where:

- We segregate less, and phase out segregation for our most vulnerable entirely; and where segregation is necessary, it will conform to international standards to mitigate the harm that segregation can do.

- We ease the pressure on community services after discharge by adequately addressing the health care needs of inmates while in custody and lowering the risks to reoffend.

- Corrections and outside professionals are more engaged in every step of an individual's care and well-being, from admission to discharge, and where our staff are positive role models for the road ahead.

- We protect the rights of people under the Ontario Human Rights Code, especially indigenous people, where efforts are made to reverse the trend of overrepresentation in our institutions by indigenous people and racialized populations.

- Programs that inmates can truly relate to are introduced to further reduce the risk to reoffend.

What I have described, Mr. Speaker, is a correctional system that is dedicated:

- to rehabilitation of offenders and those on remand through education and job training;

- to ensuring the health and mental health supports are in place should they be needed;

- to treating those in our care and in custody with respect;

- to find evidence-based alternatives to outdated practices, like the overuse of segregation. I know the member opposite earlier talked about segregation;

- to having a network in place to bridge to a smooth and successful integration within our community.

Speaker, the correctional system holds enormous power over those on remand, serving custodial sentences or those under community supervision. These are frightened people who are losing their freedoms. Many will be functioning in a controlled environment where every detail of their lives is examined and controlled by somebody else. Somebody else; I just want to remind everybody in the House.

It is said that with great power comes great responsibility. A modern correctional system must balance having great power with greater oversight and accountability to temper abuse and to ensure that the principles of safety, human rights and dignity upon which this transformation is being built are being upheld. This is what global leadership in correctional services looks like, Mr. Speaker.

Before we get there, our correctional system must overcome some major, serious challenges, and they include:

- the overuse of segregation;

- improving conditions, which the member opposite rarely talked about;

- introducing an oversight framework;

- the overrepresentation of indigenous people, as the third party never talked about, and racialized populations in our institutions—again, that he never talked about;

- renewal of correctional infrastructure that is old and well past its best-before date.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the proposed Correctional Services Transformation Act. I'm going to talk about this legislation, if passed. First, let me recap.

Corrections is one of Ontario's first public services. It has evolved and improved over the years, including many reforms introduced by this government. We are on track to meet the March 2016 commitment to hire 2,000 correctional officers over three years. These new hires are making a difference to the front lines. When I met with OPSEU recently, they told me about that. Of course, more needs to be done.

We have already begun to overhaul the use of segregation. This includes reducing the number of people held and the length of time individuals spend in segregation.

By increasing the number of mental health support nurses who provide specialized services, it will result in enhanced supports for inmates with mental health issues and launch two pilot programs to provide specialty psychiatric beds for acutely ill inmates. Mr. Speaker, as a former registered nurse, this is what I am very happy to see, that we have for the first time dedicated mental health nurses supporting those inmates with mental health issues. The new mental health screening processes for inmate admissions will also help to detect and begin early treatments, where possible.

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The implementation of the Ontario Telemedicine Network in all correctional facilities will close the gap in terms of health services delivery. As all the members in this House know, the Ontario Telemedicine Network already exists for everybody across Ontario. Why shouldn't we include inmates in terms of delivering the services, resulting in proven care across the system?

We have introduced one of the most progressive policies on management of trans inmates in North America, Mr. Speaker, and I am very proud to see the introduction of this type of services and policy. These new admission and placement policies ensure that the human rights of trans inmates are recognized and protected.

The program to install advanced-technology full-body scanners, which the member opposite talked about, in all our correctional services is almost complete. There is only one institution still left to do. They are improving inmate and staff safety by reducing the flow of contraband.

Next year, we will open the first dedicated women's mental health unit in Ontario, to meet the specific and

often complex needs of female inmates with mental health issues.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, we are getting there. But a system that was built in the three decades since the Ministry of Correctional Services Act was introduced cannot be completely transformed without new legislative tools. The Correctional Services Transformation Act contains those tools.

This act is the result of the largest consultation in the history of correctional services. We engaged with the widest number of stakeholders, including mental health and addictions service providers, community support agencies, advocacy groups, front-line staff and the public. They have all told us the same thing: We have to do things differently in correctional services.

The legislation has been guided by expert reports and recommendations such as Howard Sapers' Independent Review of Ontario Corrections, including segregation, along with the reports by the Ontario Ombudsman, the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action. These reports and recommendations have given us an invaluable road map to do things differently in correctional services.

Speaker, I wanted to share some of the pieces of the legislation with the House. We have support from many organizations, including the John Howard Society, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Mental Health Association, the Campaign for the Abolition of Solitary Confinement, the Probation Officers Association of Ontario and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. This level of support suggests to me, Mr. Speaker, that we are on the right path.

If passed, a number of legislated transformation initiatives will be implemented immediately. Others will be phased in. The reform of segregation is the biggest piece of Ontario's correctional transformation. The Ontario Human Rights Commission, for example, has raised a number of concerns dealing with segregation. The report by the Independent Adviser on Corrections Reform noted that the inmate population has been on the decline, yet the use of segregation is on the rise.

If passed, the legislation would do the following: a new definition of "segregation" based on the conditions of confinement, not on physical space in an institution; prohibitions on who can be segregated; and setting new restrictions and limits on segregation.

Our goal is to create a system that has appropriate supports and services in place so that we can arrive at a day where we no longer need the use of segregation, Mr. Speaker. But there are situations today where segregation is necessary, such as ensuring inmates' physical safety or the safety of the staff or other inmates. In these situations, inmates being held in segregation have the same rights to humane treatment as those other inmates in the institution.

What this act proposes will enable us to build more secure and humane correctional services, with less segregation, where inmates' health and mental health come

first. The anchor for such transformation will be a new definition for segregation centred on lives and experiences, not on walls and isolated spaces. In other words, Speaker, any inmate who is highly restricted in movement and association with others for 22 hours or more a day will be classified as segregated, regardless of whether the segregation takes place inside a segregation unit, their cell or anywhere else inside the institution.

Both the Independent Review of Ontario Corrections and the Ontario Ombudsman called for a clearer definition of segregation that aligns with the international standards, the so-called Mandela rules, in honour of the late South African President, Nelson Mandela. The Mandela rules suggest to us that we need to do better and to do more. Nevertheless, one of his greatest legacies are rules guiding human incarceration, including a global standard for segregation that is part of our proposed legislation. By standardizing the definition of segregation, we're putting a number of pieces in place, beginning with improved data collection.

While the ministry is already making significant improvement in terms of tracking and managing the segregation data, the collection of accurate data has been the biggest concern for the Ontario Human Rights Commission. By implementing a standardized definition of segregation based on the experience of the client over the physical space they occupy, the ministry will be able to better track and monitor those who are in place. This one step will improve overall accountability and enable us to create a system that has appropriate supports and services, including alternative housing options.

At the same time that we will introduce a new definition of segregation, we will start with prohibiting segregation for the most vulnerable inmates who:

- are pregnant or have recently given birth;
- are chronically self-harming or suicidal;
- have a significant mental illness or a significant developmental disability;
- need medical observation;
- have significant mobility impairment.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we know that some of our inmates are vulnerable. We need to make sure that they are being looked after based on the health and the mental health of these inmates. We will be phasing in on an institution-by-institution basis as they are able to comply.

In addition to taking vulnerable inmates out of segregation, we will be phasing in time restrictions and limitations on how long an inmate can remain in segregation. A person may not be held in segregation for more than 15 consecutive days. There will be a presumptive cap of 60 aggregate days of being held in conditions that constitute segregation in the preceding 365 days. And after 15 consecutive days, a superintendent can hold an inmate in conditions as identified under the new definition of segregation for five days. These time limits will be phased in across the system. Once an institution is required to comply with time limits, there will be no exemptions to exceed the time limit of 15 consecutive days.

While in segregation, an inmate would receive a daily visit from at least one member of the health care team. They would also be seen by a member of the mental health care team at least once every five days. By 2028 at the absolute latest, Mr. Speaker, all institutions will comply with segregation timelines and prohibitions proposed in this legislation. They will also have the capacity to offer more alternative housing options when an inmate cannot be housed with the general population due to medical or other special needs.

We are expecting that at newer facilities such as the Toronto South Detention Centre and the South West Detention Centre in Windsor, these limits and prohibitions will be implemented sooner. For new facilities like in Ottawa—we will be building new facilities in Ottawa and Thunder Bay—they will be a part of the institutional policy from day one.

I have spent a lot of time talking about segregation. The other piece of the proposed legislation, if passed, would talk about the living conditions of all inmates in care and in custody. The issue of living conditions in institutions is an important part of this proposed legislation. It strikes a balance between the safety, human rights and the dignity of all inmates in our correctional systems. Let us not forget that the inmates' home is actually our correctional facility. We need to remember that. Often-times we just see them as an institutional facility. Yes, they are in custody, but that is also their home.

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We will be establishing baseline conditions of confinement for all inmates as one of the key recommendations by Mr. Sapers. Current living conditions vary from institution to institution and have been a source of concern for the Ontario Human Rights Commission, as has also been echoed by the community advisory boards. They have asked us to improve the living conditions for the inmates. So if passed, the legislation will provide a minimum baseline across the system that will include the following: adequate bedding, a clean living environment, reasonable access to fresh air and natural light, and at least two in-person visits with loved ones or family per week. An inmate's link with family and friends is important because it will provide positive, stable relationships that are directly linked to reductions in reoffending. More family visits could lead to a more successful reintegration into our community. As legislators, we must take the links between inmates and their families more seriously.

We also need to recognize the need to balance dignity with the security of our institutions. The new act, if passed, would define the different types of searches and outline a specific circumstance for each type of search but also deal with the whole issue of the relationship with family and friends and those visits. Those visits will make an improvement in terms of reintegration into our communities.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, the overrepresentation of indigenous people and racialized populations in our institutions is one of the greatest challenges facing correctional services across North America. We know from

statistics—these are the data that we have—that indigenous people just make up 2% of Ontario's population, yet they account for 12% of the inmate population. Black Canadians now represent the fastest-growing group in our federal prisons, and they are overrepresented behind bars. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? We need to ask ourselves.

The ministry has no control over who comes into our custody or the length or circumstances of their stay. Those decisions rest entirely with the courts. We can and will have control over the services our overrepresented groups receive in custody and the supports that are needed for successful reintegration back into the community. Evidence-based programs and services are intrinsic to the rehabilitation and reintegration of our clients. Programs that do not connect with the audience represent a wasted opportunity. By introducing programs that inmates relate to, we have the greatest potential to reduce the risk of reoffending.

The proposed act, if passed, will require all rehabilitative, general and work programs to account for the diverse and unique needs of the inmate population, with a strong focus on the needs of overrepresented individuals. Mr. Speaker, I can talk on and on about this whole issue. I know that members of this House are also concerned about this.

Separate from this legislation, there will also be an advisory committee made up of indigenous justice system experts to provide advice on the delivery of services to indigenous individuals. This advisory committee addresses the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. There will also be an advisory committee to the minister on measures to address the overrepresentation of black inmates and how the correctional system can do better to support their reintegration into our community.

Speaker, there have always been concerns raised to our government about the whole issue of oversight and transparency. If the legislation is passed, this will be the largest transformation in the history of Ontario's correctional services. The proposed legislation will mean the creation of an independent inspector general to review, report and issue direction on the treatment of inmates and the conditions of confinement. The creation of an independent corrections inspector general to ensure oversight and accountability was one of the key recommendations of Mr. Sapers's report. The inspector general for corrections would ensure that the ministry and staff are in compliance with the legislation and all policies and would be able to issue directives to the ministry.

The act also proposes oversight of segregation by establishing regional independent review panels. These panels were also recommended by Mr. Sapers. The composition of the panels will be individuals who are highly qualified and have an understanding of the correctional system and all related issues. The proposed panels would review and make decisions on cases where clients are held in non-disciplinary segregation. They would also ensure that segregated inmates are held in the

least restrictive conditions possible. The proposed act would, for the first time, legislate a requirement for correctional employees to comply with enhanced training standards and perform to expectations to support a culture of professionalism and continuous development.

The proposed oversight framework also includes a chief of investigations to investigate employee code of conduct matters and security-related matters. The staff must have the disciplinary tools to ensure the security of the institution, and the safety of inmates and staff must be addressed. The act proposes a disciplinary hearings officer to conduct hearings and make decisions for serious acts of misconduct by inmates.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken a lot about oversight and transparency, as well as the definition of the term “segregation.” For the first time, we are transforming the infrastructure of correctional services. In particular, when pre-trial inmates occupy right now 60% of all beds compared to 30% over a decade ago, there has got to be some conversation here. We will be renovating our facilities to add programming space, better visitation areas and improved mental health services. We will build where the need is the greatest. The new institutions in Thunder Bay and Ottawa are our first priority, as well as the new secure women’s treatment facility, an important part of this transformation plan.

We know, as a government, we cannot rebuild the old jails of the past; we need to move forward to the 21st century. Our expectations for minimum conditions of confinement, staff and inmate safety, clinical support and program space, family contact and supports and alternatives to segregation will be rolled into the design of these institutions from day one.

If passed by this House, these new facilities will be the first pieces of correctional services infrastructure to be built under the new transformation framework. As such, they will provide innovation platforms that will include single-cell accommodation based on client risk level, open visiting space, alternative needs-based housing, space for commitment of medical and mental health services and greater supervision.

There is more that can be done, of course, with regard to the proposed legislation. The other part, because of time constraints—the proposed legislation, in terms of budget—and I know the member opposite, during the public hearings and clause-by-clause, was talking about the whole issue of budget. I just wanted to make sure the opposition member knows that the overhaul and the many transformations that I just spoke about are in the 2018 budget.

In terms of the proposed legislation, we have arrived at an unprecedented time of public scrutiny of the Ontario criminal justice system, including the delivery of correctional services. Sentencing is the unfortunate consequence of bad decisions—bad decisions that come from a number of causes, including poverty, substance abuse and lack of access to support services.

The other piece here is how we approach bail and remand and how we support the physical, emotional and

learning needs of those placed in our custody or of those who are serving a sentence in their community. Why people get sucked into the criminal justice system in the first place and how we can prevent it from happening or recurring is all part of the work we’re trying to address.

I’m excited about the vision that we are proposing in transforming the Ontario correctional system. I know the opposition keeps criticizing the government. I’m also proud that we are making historical investments to address societal prejudice as well as injustice that catches people in the justice system and that drives them into our institutions in the first place.

We also know change cannot happen overnight. While immediate and deliberate action is necessary to address the inequities in our correctional system, change of this magnitude will take time. Much more work and much more consultation lies ahead.

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude my remarks, I want to encourage all members opposite that if the House passes the new legislation, we will enter a new phase of transformation of the Ontario correctional system, a system where we will incarcerate less, where we will eventually eliminate segregation altogether and where institutions are more safe for the inmates as well as our staff, because at the end of the day, when the inmates are safe, our staff will be safe. When those in our care or those in our custody also have the support they need, they will be contributing members of our society.

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Mr. Speaker, during the clause-by-clause discussion last week, except for two proposed motions from the third party—and the official opposition party had no motions, no recommendations for improvement. I can say, without hesitation, that we know we need to do better. We know that the inmates in our correctional facilities deserve better.

We also know that our staff have been forthright, have been honest, but more importantly have been working hard to make sure that our facilities are safe. In my final couple of minutes, I want to thank them again for all the good work they do, being strong advocates for the inmates but, more importantly, keeping our communities safe, whether they’re correctional officers, parole officers or staff. When I was visiting North Bay Jail as well as the Toronto East Detention Centre, I spent some time in the kitchens—they were having so much fun. I wanted to say to each one of you, thank you, thank you, thank you for what you do because, at the end of the day, you are our employees, you are working hard for our people, but, more importantly, we need to do better to ensure that your needs and your concerns have been heard.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you for this opportunity to speak in the third reading debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I rise in the House today to address what I believe to be a very serious problem. I’m speaking about Bill 6—the third time in this House that I’ve been dismayed to say that nothing about it has

actually improved. The fundamental problem is that the government is not serious about fixing the crisis in corrections, but more specifically, the Liberal government has a history of producing incomplete, skeletal and poorly-thought-out legislation. This bill is no exception to that rule, and no amount of amendment will fix a bill that is fundamentally deficient. In this case, 115 amendments were proposed, and most were passed recently—all of them primarily cosmetic, without any serious changes to a deeply flawed bill.

I was speaking with a particular individual in corrections who said they had submitted some changes. They were reassured by this government, but they have nothing in print yet that this one particular change would occur. Until that happens, I stand here with bated breath.

The Correctional Services Transformation Act, 2018, is supposed to be a thorough overhaul of a broken correctional system, but it has the same flaws as most other Liberal legislation. The bill will not resolve what has come to be called the crisis in corrections.

Before I get into the substance of the bill, let me tell you a little bit about that crisis. Last year, a report by the independent adviser on corrections reform described the shocking abuses and disorder in Ontario's detention centres. Detention centres are overcrowded, the report went on to say, and cell block violence is a huge problem; in fact, it's at an all-time high.

After violent incidents, inmates are often held in solitary confinement without access to rehabilitation programs, and lockdowns are often the only resource due to short-staffing. This has the potential to invite serious abuses. But even when solitary confinement or segregation isn't used as a punishment, it still poses a huge problem.

On the Liberals' watch, prisoners like Adam Capay have been held in solitary confinement while awaiting trial. Capay was held for four years in conditions so degrading that previous inmates of the same cell had died, but the Liberals just didn't seem to care. They ignored repeated coroners' inquests warning of unsafe conditions. Fifty reports went up to the minister's office, and they were all ignored—50 reports. It would be convenient to say that the corrections minister was simply asleep at the switch, but in fact, the minister at that time had made a personal visit to Adam Capay's cell. Sadly, not even that prompted him to act, and the Liberal government continued to ignore the problem. I'm talking about a previous minister, not the current minister.

It only became a problem for the Premier and her government when Adam Capay's case finally reached the newspapers—well, so much for the myth of the old social justice government and the social justice Premier. That's how the Premier said she wanted to be remembered. I don't think it's working.

Also released last year, a surveillance video from the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre in London shows just how bad violence in detention centres can be. In that video, an inmate can be seen beating his cellmate to death. A staffing shortage prevented the kind of interven-

tion that might have stopped that altercation and saved the life of that inmate. This is part of the systemic problem.

Sadly, assaults on correctional officers and other staff have more than doubled over the past seven years. That's very alarming to me and to all others as well. My contacts within the world of corrections mention it whenever we speak.

Much of the violence in Ontario's detention centres is derived from smuggled weapons and drugs. Full-body scanners would do a lot to keep those things out of detention centres, but not all Ontario jails have scanners yet. A year ago, the Attorney General promised to install full-body scanners in all of Ontario's prisons, but we're still waiting. What's the holdup? Why does it take so long? Why does the government treat the corrections file like an afterthought?

Speaker, it gets worse. Ontario's probation and parole system is a joke. Yes, that's exactly what the criminals have called it. Our probation and parole officers are not to blame. In many cases, they are actively discouraged from checking up on criminals by making house visits because of insufficient resources. Many are told that they're not even allowed to work outside of business hours.

Guidelines published by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services explicitly state that community visits are a valuable method of verifying information and enhancing supervision, and yet they're not happening. I don't blame the probation and parole officers. Even though compared to a few years ago their caseloads have been reduced, it's still to the point where they're having difficulty managing—not because of their skill sets, but because of the quantity and the lack of resources this government is providing.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, do you know that offenders are often left to self-report—that's right, self-report: "I'm on probation. Oh, don't worry, I'll come in. You don't have to call me." Guess what? They don't. Very few will self-report.

A 2014 report by the Ontario Auditor General drew attention to this problem, and a shocking Global News documentary on corrections published last year came to the same conclusions. In that documentary, the corrections minister was unable to answer any questions seriously, and she was unable to explain why violent criminals were not being properly monitored. I found this to be, quite truthfully, outrageous. It's clearly part of an embarrassing pattern from this low-information government.

Here's what the stakeholders are saying. Under the Liberal regime over the past 15 years, probation and parole policy-makers have put enormous emphasis on probation and parole offender risk assessments, such as domestic violence, sex offences, enhanced offender-needs risk assessments, STICS and so forth. Strangely, this has basically transformed the role of the probation and parole officer from that of a public safety peace officer to that of a psychotherapist or mental health clinician.

Nothing brought this to light better than Carolyn Jarvis's Global News investigative report entitled *Probation and Parole: Who's Watching?* The current minister, as I said, was interviewed in that documentary, and it did not go well. Whether anyone in the government saw it, I don't know.

Anyway, Liberal probation and parole policies prohibit officers from conducting compliance checks and monitoring their offenders' adherence to probation and conditional sentence orders in the community.

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My friend Scott McIntyre is a vice-president at OPSEU, and probation and parole MERC representative. As he puts it, "The Liberals have removed the 'community' from community corrections." Scott has a way with words, and so I'm going to quote him again. He went on to say, "Excessive workloads and a lack of appropriate safety and security measures for probation and parole officers has handcuffed us to our desks."

Handcuffed to our desks? That's a shocking image, but I'm afraid it's what I would expect from a tired, out-of-touch, low-information government that does not respect its stakeholders.

The ministry says that police are responsible for performing P&P compliance checks. However, Global's investigative report clearly confirmed that the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police do not agree that their responsibility is in fact to do that.

Honestly, who's monitoring and who's performing compliance checks on the nearly 45,000 criminals who reside in our communities? When we realize that 60% of those criminals are medium to very high risk—so if I did a quick check, 60% of 45,000, in my quick math in my head, equates to somewhere around 27,000 of those 45,000 criminals who reside in our communities are medium to high risk—who's watching them?

The crisis in corrections seems even more severe. This is an outrage, an absolute outrage, and we cannot blame our probation and parole officers for the fine job they're doing and/or attempting to do because, as Scott McIntyre has said, this government has handcuffed our probation and parole officers to their desks.

The investigative report showed that offenders describe probation and parole as a joke, and it's getting worse. I mentioned that earlier.

I want to refer to my hometown, the great riding of Chatham-Kent. In Chatham-Kent there is a place called Abiding House. When individuals are released from our detention centres and they check in with probation and parole, a lot of times they don't have a place to go. Abiding House in Chatham is one spot where they go. It's reasonable housing for clients, but unfortunately it's also become a drug haven, and police are often called to that location.

We used to have what I would call a halfway house in Chatham. It was called St. Leonard's society. Other St. Leonard's societies are still in existence, but in Chatham, unfortunately, it has closed. That was a safe haven for those who don't have a place to live. They could in fact

go there and find refuge and, as a result, begin to re-acquaint themselves with society and hopefully turn over a new page in their lives and get on with proper living, and not find themselves detained again in detention centres.

There's another place in Chatham. I visited it; I support it very much. It's a place called Hope Haven. Hope Haven is run by a church organization in Chatham that cares about its community; it cares about my community. It's for homeless men, men who just don't have a place to stay. They provide a refuge for them. They provide them with food; they provide them with a place of shelter overnight. Unfortunately, they need help as well.

I've also been told that the women's centre in Chatham, which I strongly support—on occasion women who have been released and do not have a home can, if there is room at the Chatham women's centre, find refuge there, but again, it's only temporary. Again, there are challenges.

Since Howard Sapers released the report in the fall of 2017, we've seen an astonishing increase of more than 40% of criminals being released on parole. I mention that early. If this statistic were more widely known, people would in fact be furious. It would appear that the Ontario Liberals have foolishly released criminals from custody into a probation and parole system that has a critical workload crisis and which does not perform offender monitoring in the form of compliance checks. The Liberals have utterly failed at ensuring the safety of Ontarians by way of having sufficient staffing numbers of PPOs—probation and parole officers—in a system that actively monitors offenders in our communities.

The system is broken, and we need to find a way of enhancing that system to make it stronger and better for everyone concerned—not just the probation and parole officers, not just for those who have been released on parole, but for the safety of our communities.

One of the most basic duties of a government is to maintain an orderly and safe society. But if criminals on parole or probation are not being properly supervised, then the government has failed to perform a key part of that duty.

Front-line stakeholders, such as corrections officers represented by OPSEU, are justifiably outraged. Not long ago, that union began a letter-writing campaign to bring awareness to the crisis in corrections. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, what was said. I am quoting from an OPSEU media release:

"For decades, the Ontario government has neglected our correctional facilities. As a result, there is a constant threat to the safety of inmates and staff.

"Further, our probation officers have such high workloads that they are unable to safely and effectively monitor offenders released into our communities.

"These are just two issues that have created a crisis in corrections. The crisis poses a clear danger to staff safety, inmate safety, and public safety"—I mentioned that earlier, and it's worth mentioning again—"and it must be addressed without further delay."

Emails went to MPPs, with copies to the Premier, the corrections services minister, the Attorney General and the crisis-in-corrections team. It was a great example of civic engagement. But the response was appalling.

Let me quote Chris Jackel, who is chairman of the bargaining team for the correctional bargaining unit. I'm referencing another OPSEU media release here. "It's very discouraging when government MPPs try to deny that our correctional system is in crisis. It shows just how completely out of touch the government is with the reality in corrections." That's exactly what he said.

Furthermore, OPSEU condemned the canned, low-information response from the government. Jackel called the prepared messages "highly politicized." He said that it was "the kind of non-response politicians use at question period to avoid answering difficult questions." I might add, Mr. Speaker, that those of us on the opposition side, whether it be the PCs or the NDP, ask the questions, but we never get answers from the government. Chris Jackel called that "a slap in the face." Those are strong words, but I'm afraid I have to agree.

By way of example, Jackel came down hard on the government's assertion that "Ontario's streets are safer than ever." Jackel described the claim as "preposterous." He pointed out that a Global News investigation revealed there are no compliance checks for as many as 50,000 offenders in the community, including sex offenders. Furthermore, Ontario has the country's highest rates of recidivism.

I want to emphasize what the origin of the bill really is. This bill is not a response to the complaints and eyewitness testimony of our front-line workers. The bill comes in response to a series of damning reports and investigations by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the Ontario Ombudsman, the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre Task Force and the independent adviser on corrections. It's appalling that some of these findings highlight problems that were already old but never properly addressed.

My friend Monte Vieselmeyer, who is chairman of the ministry employee relations committee for correctional services at OPSEU, had this to say in a press release last year:

"The ministry has failed to give front-line staff the tools they need to properly manage segregation. I refer to these tools as the three Ts: training, technology, and time."

"Of course, none of these things come without a price tag," Vieselmeyer added. "They require substantial funding and staffing investments by the ministry. If they're serious about easing the crisis around segregation, they have to address the larger crisis in corrections."

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OPSEU president Warren "Smokey" Thomas had some strong comments also. In response to the Ombudsman's report on segregation, he had the following to say:

"None of this is new—it's all about a properly funded corrections system and properly funded public services. There's just no getting around it, and nothing is going to

change until this government finally takes responsibility for easing the crisis that its austerity agenda has created."

We're talking about a serious breakdown in an important part of our justice system and a failure to enforce law and order. We're talking about problems which extend to every part of the corrections system. Minor tinkering just isn't going to help.

Let me repeat so that I'm not misunderstood: Detention centres are crowded and cellblock violence is a huge problem. After violent incidents, inmates are often held in solitary confinement without access to rehabilitation programs.

A newly released surveillance video from the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre in London—I talked about this earlier, but it's worth repeating—shows just how bad the violence can be. In that video, as I mentioned earlier, an inmate is seen beating a cellmate to death. A staffing shortage prevented the kind of intervention that might have stopped the altercation and, as I said earlier, saved that individual's life.

Assaults on correctional officers and other staff have more than doubled over the past seven years. Too many inmates are now held in solitary confinement, often in appalling conditions, and sometimes for years. The Ontario Human Rights Commission has taken the government to court over such terrible abuses.

Why am I reminding you of all this, Mr. Speaker? Well, let me tell you. People often say that Canada's founding motto is "peace, order and good government." That's from the British North America Act. Apart from that, the maintenance of order is an important conservative principle.

Edmund Burke, the father of English-speaking conservatism, put it best:

"The only liberty that is valuable is a liberty connected with order; that not only exists along with order and virtue, but which cannot exist at all without them. It inheres in good and steady government, as in its substance and vital principle."

But what is order? Let me answer the question by quoting American historian and political theorist Russell Kirk: "'Order' is the principle and the process by which the peace and harmony of society are maintained. It is the arrangement of rights and duties in a state to ensure that people will have just leaders, loyal citizens, and public tranquility. It implies the obedience of a nation to the laws of God, and the obedience of individuals to just authority. Without order, justice can rarely be enforced, and freedom cannot be maintained." That quote was from political theorist Russell Kirk.

In our political tradition, we do not separate order from justice and freedom. Again, Russell Kirk explains: "'Justice' is the principle and the process by which each man is accorded the things that are his own—the things that belong to his nature. This concept the old Greeks and Romans expressed in the phrase 'to each his own.' It is the principle and the process that protects a man's life, his property, his proven rights, his station in life, his dignity. It also is the principle and the process that metes

out punishment to the evildoer, which enforces penalties against violence and fraud. The allegorical figure of Justice always holds a sword. Justice is the cornerstone of the world—divine justice and human justice. It is the first necessity of any decent society.”

He goes on to say, “‘Freedom’ is the principle and the process by which a man is made master of his own life. It implies the right of all members of adult society to make their own choices in most matters. A slave is a person whose actions, in all important respects, are directed by others; a free man is a person who has the right—and the responsibility—of deciding how he is to live with himself and his neighbours.”

Again, I say that the most basic duty of government is to maintain an orderly society. That is the foundation of justice and freedom. But if the detention centres are inhumane, and dangerous criminals on parole or probation are not being properly supervised, the government has failed to maintain an orderly society.

The current Liberal government and its supporters should ask themselves how they allowed this to happen. They should start by asking themselves why they allowed appalling violence in detention centres to get so out of control. How did they allow detention centres to become so badly crowded? Why are they over capacity?

Why has it not occurred to the minister that overcrowded jails could, at least in theory, be combatted by reducing excessive wait times for corrections investigations and by providing the resources necessary for more staff in detention centres? Why is it not obvious that the proper supervision and enforcement of probation and parole orders is absolutely essential? Why does no one seem to realize that it's high time the government did something about enforcing its own guidelines?

We all know that an election is looming. This pre-election conversion just won't cut it, and it's fooling no one. Those recent reports that I mentioned paint a very grim picture indeed. Minor tinkering is not going to fix the crisis in corrections. The government must take serious and thorough action immediately, not 10 years from now. The bill before us now is just totally inadequate.

The Liberal government, which is about to shuffle off this mortal coil, wants us to believe that they've had a deathbed conversion—or maybe a pre-election conversion would be a tad more accurate. I suppose the Liberals didn't want to go down in history as dumb on crime. They wanted one last shot at addressing stakeholder anger and maybe even at correcting their own mistakes. So, less than 100 days before the next election, they finally introduced this bill, which purports to resolve the crisis that I just described. I really want to emphasize the word “purports,” because this bill is really the triumph of hope over experience. As I speak, we're just 10 days before the writ drops, so this Liberal government is now ramming this poorly written bill through the Legislature.

I note that OPSEU was pleased about one major aspect of this bill, however, which is that the government seems to finally have decided that there really is a crisis

in corrections. Otherwise, the bill leaves much to be desired.

When it comes to criticizing the bill, the problem is not where to begin but where to stop. So let's start.

Let me draw your attention to one of the strangest aspects of this bill. Would you believe me if I told you that the government is giving itself 10 years to bring this bill into effect? That's correct: 10 years. You can see it for yourself in section 147(2). What kind of government needs 10 years to pass and implement a law? Did the Chrétien-Martin government pass legislation only to have it finally implemented under Stephen Harper a decade later? No. Did the McGuinty government spend nearly 10 years passing and implementing legislation from the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves government? Is Prime Minister Gerald Butts—I mean, Justin Trudeau—busy passing Stephen Harper's bills? No, that would be laughable.

So there are two things a reasonable person might conclude about this very, very strange timeline. One is that the Liberals think that they deserve to be in power forever. They think that they will be in power forever, or at least 10 years from now. The ridiculous 10-year timetable will suit that fantasy just fine. Another, more likely, possibility is that the Liberals don't know how to solve the crisis in corrections and don't expect to be able to do so ever. Well, Mr. Speaker, my instincts tell me that the second one is true, not the first.

This absurdly long time period is a good enough reason on its own to reject the bill altogether. There are, of course, other good reasons.

But, Mr. Speaker, what does this bill propose? Let's get into that right now. First, the bill attempts to redefine what “segregation” means. Let me read from the bill:

“Inmates held in conditions that constitute segregation or restrictive confinement retain all rights and privileges of inmates in general population housing except those that can only be enjoyed in association with other inmates.

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“Certain inmates cannot be held in conditions that constitute segregation, including inmates who are pregnant, chronically self-harming or suicidal or who have significant mental illnesses or developmental disabilities. Inmates shall not be held in conditions that constitute segregation for more than 15 consecutive days or for more than 60 aggregate days in a 365-day period. The aggregate day maximum can be exceeded if authorized by a decision of the independent review panel. These limits do not apply in prescribed correctional institutions.

“Superintendents may hold inmates in non-disciplinary segregation in certain exceptional cases if all other options to manage the inmate have been exhausted. The superintendent shall maintain a record of the options that were exhausted before the inmate was held in those conditions. The superintendent shall also conduct a preliminary review of the case within 24 hours after they are placed in those conditions. Inmates being held in conditions that constitute segregation for non-disciplinary

reasons must be offered the opportunity at regular intervals to associate with others.”

Again, I’m quoting from the bill.

“Provisions for regular visits by health care professionals to inmates held in conditions that constitute segregation are provided. In particular, a member of the mental health care service team must review the inmate’s mental health at least once every five days.

“A referral must be made to the independent regional chair to have a hearing before an independent review panel when an inmate has been held in conditions that constitute segregation for non-disciplinary reasons for either five or 10 consecutive days. A referral must also be made for any inmate held in conditions that constitute segregation when they reach 30 and 55 aggregate days of being held in those conditions.

“Upon receiving a referral, the chair shall convene an independent review panel to review the inmate’s case and determine whether it is reasonable to continue holding the inmate in conditions that constitute segregation. The panel can also authorize a superintendent to continue to hold an inmate past the limit of 60 aggregate days in a 365-day period.”

Speaker, as I’m reading this, I can’t help but think that it’s got to be kind of confusing to keep track of all that. How are they ever going to keep of track of all this—the superintendent—for just one person? But let’s compound that by probably dozens. How is the superintendent going to be able to keep track of all that, and the independent review panel, and the paperwork that’s involved at 15 days, at 30 days, at 55 days and so on? That’s just in one detention centre, but then that’s compounded by the number of detention centres, and assuming there is an average in all of them—it’s unbelievable.

So let’s pause for just a moment and break that down simply. The bill aims to define segregation as any type of custody where an inmate is highly restricted in movement and association with others for 22 hours or more in a day. Certain inmates, such as those who are pregnant, mentally or physically ill or suicidal, will be exempt from segregation. I understand that. Segregation will be restricted to not more than 15 days, not more than 60 aggregate days in a year—I’ve mentioned that before—subject to review by an independent review panel which will be created by this bill and future regulations.

Here is the essence of the problem, Mr. Speaker. My contacts within the world of corrections tell me this is a bad move. Why? First of all, I look at it and say, “Wow. More bureaucracy, more paperwork and red tape involved.” We need to deal with the problem, not with the paperwork. The threat of segregation as a deterrent or its use as a punishment will significantly be reduced if the penalty for misbehaving will be predictably restricted to no more than 15 days and no more than 60 aggregate days in a year in segregation. Obviously the legislation perceives the possibility of extending or prolonging segregation, but the precise details of this are vague because they are left up to future regulations.

Now again, I mentioned Monte Vieselmeyer, the chairman of the correctional division at OPSEU. Monte

acknowledges that the bill addresses a number of corrections-related issues including segregation, but after examining the bill, he said that correctional officers were still awaiting alternatives to segregation.

This is what he had to say in a recent news release: “If the government wants to address segregation, they need to provide alternatives for the various reasons it’s currently used. One inmate to one cell would solve the problem. In light of Canadian case law, we need answers.” That’s what he said.

But what the bill describes sounds not only inadequate, but also pretty bad. I’m referring to the plan to create an independent review panel. Leaving aside the fact that most of what it will do, how it will be staffed and so forth are left up to some future undemocratic regulatory process, this panel sounds like little more than a whole lot of paper pushing and bureaucracy. That’s what it amounts to.

The independent review panel will review and decide cases of segregation—I’ve talked about this before—after five and 10 consecutive days, and after 30 and 55 aggregate days of segregation over the course of a year. That’s just for one person—the independent review panel, reviewing this for one. But as I said before, let’s compound that.

Here’s the description of it from the preamble to the bill: “A referral must be made to the independent regional chair to have a hearing before an independent review panel when an inmate has been held in conditions that constitute segregation for non-disciplinary reasons for either five or 10 consecutive days.... A referral must also be made for any inmate held in conditions that constitute segregation when they reach 30 and 55 aggregate days of being held in those conditions.” If I’ve said that once, I’ve probably now said it three or four times.

“Upon receiving a referral, the chair shall convene an independent review panel to review the inmate’s case and determine whether it is reasonable to continue holding the inmate in conditions that constitute segregation. The panel can also authorize a superintendent to continue to hold an inmate past the limit of 60 aggregate days in a 365-day period.”

I hope my colleagues across the aisle are paying attention. I hope they are, but I don’t even know if they have read their own legislation. But I digress.

The bill foresees an excessively bureaucratic process of report-writing, consultation and deliberation on inmates in segregation. The independent review panel would review and make decisions on cases of segregation at intervals of five, 10, 30 and 55 days of segregation over the course of a year, potentially 16 or more reports over the course of a year for one inmate. Let’s compound that, and we’ll have an idea of how many reports are being prepared.

When I think about that, that’s just absolutely ridiculous. But again, the independent review panel is obviously meant to address abuse connected with the segregation of Adam Capay, who spent 1,560 days in solitary confinement awaiting trial in conditions so appalling that previous inmates had actually died there.

What's the problem, you ask? Senior bureaucrats at the Ministry of Correctional Services had been alerted more than 50 times about Capay's segregation. The minister at that time had even visited Capay's cell and had seen for himself the horrendous conditions there. So 50 reports and a personal visit from the minister of the day didn't motivate this government to do something about Adam Capay and the horrendous conditions in which he had been confined. How will more bureaucracy and even more reports help?

In this connection, I'm reminded of that quotable quotation from John Maynard Keynes: "Government machinery has been described as a marvelous labour-saving device which enables 10 men to do the work of one." Isn't that just the case?

Then there's that famous US politician, President Ronald Reagan. He says this: "No government ever voluntarily reduces itself in size. Government programs, once launched, never disappear. Actually, a government bureau is the nearest thing to eternal life we'll ever see on this earth." I think that Ronnie was right. However, perhaps after June 7 there just may be a change to that. We may be making some major changes to some programs for sure.

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Obviously, the Liberals are inclined to think that more bureaucracy is the solution to every problem, but I beg to differ. At best, all that the independent review panel will do is chew up and drain valuable resources. At worst, it may create a culture of excessive report-writing in order to justify the existence of the independent review panel itself.

The fundamental problem is not the number or the frequency of reports; it's the fact that in the case of Capay, all the reports were ignored. More paper-pushing just isn't going to solve that problem. Only a better, more attentive, more competent minister and staff will do that.

The present minister's attempt to dodge the questions about the dysfunctional parole system and the rest of the crisis in corrections is an appalling abnegation of her ministerial responsibility. Ministerial responsibility means that a minister is ultimately responsible for all actions of a ministry, whether he or she knows about it or not.

Ministerial responsibility is not a statute or a codified part of our Constitution. It is a part of our unwritten traditions. But this doesn't make it any less important. If waste, corruption or any other misbehaviour is found to have occurred within a ministry, the minister is responsible, even without knowledge of misdeeds or oversights by subordinates. The minister approved the hiring and continued employment of those people within the ministry.

Normally, if improper conduct occurred in a ministry, an honourable minister would feel compelled to resign. Obviously, this hasn't happened in this case, which is another indication that this government just doesn't take its work particularly seriously. In fact, the minister's attitude and behaviour have seriously eroded ministerial

responsibility and decreased the public's trust in government.

Look, Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry to say that this half-baked piece of non-legislation isn't going to get the Liberals out of the mess that they've created and worsened.

Problems with the rest of the bill are basically similar to what I've just described. Let me repeat: Forcing bureaucrats to write more and more reports isn't going to do anything as long as ministers and their staff continue to ignore them. But hang on to your pens; there's a whole lot more report writing a-comin'.

Lockdowns are a typical way of dealing with out-of-control cell block violence, especially in overcrowded detention centres. This government seems determined to put a stop to that practice and to introduce new and more onerous bureaucracy. According to the bill, if lockdowns last for five consecutive days, the superintendent must write a report and send it to the deputy minister and the inspector general. Superintendents must make and submit a new report for every subsequent day of the lockdown. Have I mentioned report-writing? Have I mentioned how onerous that is, and how time-consuming it is?

Lockdowns occur because staff are outnumbered and unable to control cell block violence in overcrowded detention centres. That is the root of the problem. Increased report-writing is not going to address the root cause, and will only serve to burden front-line workers even further.

An inspector general will be established by an order in council. That person will have a broad mandate to review, report and direct on the treatment of inmates and conditions in prisons. Again, the big problem here is that legislation leaves all further details about this position to be defined in—what do you think it is? Well, let me help you: It's regulations. All further details about this position are to be defined in regulations. That's stuff that we don't get a chance to see, but it goes on behind the scenes. We're going to have to say no—no input, no influence and no control over the regulatory process.

But get this: The inspector general is going to have a lot of work to do taking care of criminals and making sure that they're comfortable. Why, you ask? Well, the bill will require every inmate to have access to every kind of health care service. Inmates in segregation must receive a daily visit from at least one member of a health care service team. That's better than most people in the province of Ontario, Mr. Speaker. This is better health care coverage and treatment than most Ontario families. How about that? This just doesn't seem fair, and a lot of people would be justifiably upset if they knew about that. Well, hello out there; I'm making you aware.

It gets worse. It's as though this government thinks that every problem can be solved by more bureaucracy and report-writing. Let me just say that if bureaucracy immunized us from problems, nothing would ever have gone wrong in Ontario.

Back to the bill: The bill provides for disciplinary hearing officers to be created by the order in council.

Their job will be to conduct hearings and to sanction serious misconduct by inmates. All further details are left to future—oh, here's that word again, Speaker; golly—regulations.

Here's a relevant passage: "An allegation of serious misconduct shall be referred to a disciplinary hearings officer. The officer conducts a hearing and may impose more significant disciplinary measures if he or she determines that the inmate has committed serious misconduct, including imposing conditions that constitute segregation for no more than 15 consecutive days. The inmate may seek to have a decision of the officer reviewed by another disciplinary hearings officer." The silliest thing with this is that "serious misconduct" is nowhere defined in the bill, so once again, future regulations will determine whatever that means.

I can think of two problems with that, right away. First, as I keep saying, the regulatory process is entirely undemocratic, and this arbitrary government will be able to force whatever they want on the corrections community. Second, it's fundamentally irrational to leave undefined "serious misconduct" in a bill whose purpose is, at least in part, to make correctional officers safer when dealing with violent inmates and assaults. This is obviously a major failure of the bill.

Front-line workers tell me that they feel that they are in danger. Correctional officers are outnumbered, and they have little recourse when they are attacked. Something needs to be done to keep our front-line workers safe. This is why they are so alarmed that the bill seems to severely restrict the use of strip searches. Instead of stipulating conditions under which strip searches "may" occur, which is how this bill reads now, the bill should specify when they "shall" occur in section 100. Otherwise, the act appears to limit the use of strip searches significantly.

Let me quote again from Monte Vieselmeyer, OPSEU chairman of the corrections division. I'm referencing a recent OPSEU media release so that we can have an idea of what our stakeholders are saying on this point.

"We've done everything possible to make the government recognize the crisis in corrections and take immediate steps to alleviate it.... The government finally agreed the system was in crisis and required a complete overhaul.

"However, we remain extremely concerned that the safety of front-line staff has not been clearly addressed in the bill.... The government has promised that no transformation can succeed without continuous feedback from staff. So we know they'll hear again and again about the vital need for significantly improved safety and security."

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Monte and I have had many, many different discussions. He tells me that dangerously low staffing levels greatly increase the risk to front-line workers. "The government claims it's hired 1,100 new correctional officers. But they're fixed-term officers who fill in when regular officers are away. In reality, only 24 new correctional officers positions have been created."

Why increase the danger by restricting officers' ability to strip-search inmates and eliminate things like drugs and weapons?

Unsurprisingly, stakeholders within the correctional officers' and probation and parole officers' community demand a zero-tolerance policy for violation, along with serious deterrents from and punishments for assault. In fact, all my contacts tell me that they want the minister to do much more to protect the safety of front-line workers.

Let me draw to your attention, Mr. Speaker, a very important feature of the bill. There is a section of the bill called "duties of minister"; that's in section 3. Front-line workers are adamant that this section include a duty to ensure a safe workplace for staff. This bill seems to be all about the inmates—and I understand. Look, I'll be the first to admit that there are some good parts in this bill, but what is the role of opposition? It's to hold the government's feet to the fire and to be critical of aspects. I don't think that they did proper consultation with the key stakeholders, because it's those key stakeholders who are coming to me and saying, "Rick, this bill is inadequate."

Mr. Speaker, let me draw to your attention an important feature of the bill. There's a section of the bill called "duties of minister," as I mentioned, section 3. Front-line workers are adamant that this section include a duty to ensure a safe workplace for staff, as I mentioned. Stakeholders report that investigations into misconduct take far too long, sometimes as long as 15 months. Investigations should be limited so that a CO can have his or her name cleared or be disciplined more expediently. That's in section 188 and following.

I have concerns. If there is an individual who has been accused, let's say, of using excessive force on an inmate—and excessive force could be very easily defined as an inmate coming towards a correctional officer, and the correctional officer has no idea what that inmate is about to do so the correctional officer, he or she, puts their hand up to stop the advancement of an inmate and their hand lands on the shoulder. Well, the tapes might reveal and their supervisors might say, "You have used excessive force in stopping that inmate," and the inmate might in fact file—I'll call it—a grievance against the correctional officer.

Well, Mr. Speaker, here's a concern that I have: I really believe that if we're going to have good leadership, it's got to come from the top. Now, I'm going to refer—not to the minister and ministerial staff, at this point. I'm going to refer to our senior people in our detention centres, and I personally feel that what's lacking is their ability—it seems like many of them who come from the rank and file, the front line, who then get promoted into a supervisory position, forget what it was like to be a CO. Now they feel that their role is to nitpick and get on the cases of their correctional officers for what I would call petty instances. Sometimes these drag out for months and sometimes that particular individual who is being accused is suspended, mostly with pay, depending upon the severity. Suspended with pay, but they want to get

back to work because this is hanging over their head: "Am I going to have a job or am I not going to have a job?"

What management needs to realize is that they must work together as a team. That means management and the front-line staff must work together within our detention centres. That way, the officers will feel that management has their back as opposed to being afraid to turn their back on management for fear of having a sharp object inserted into their back. They've got to watch their backs.

It's unfortunate. It's not just the correctional officers, but it's even our probation and parole officers. Their safety is imperative as well. Yet there are many aspects of this bill that don't cover off the safety of our probation and parole officers. You have heard me talk about the fact that we have roughly—I think the number was 27,000 probation and parole people walking around, as medium- to high-risk parolees are on probation without any real supervision at all. It's not the fault of the probation and parole officers.

Then these individuals come into their offices, and how safe do the probation and parole officers feel? We are dealing with fentanyl and the dangers of that. We are maybe dealing with concealed weapons. I have been told that some have actually come in to a probation office to report, but they are brandishing a weapon, a knife or something along those lines. This bill doesn't address that. My number one rule for all correctional officers, probation and parole people and others affiliated in corrections, is that everyone goes home safe. I know the government will agree with me on that.

But let me focus on something else here, Mr. Speaker. Some major provisions of this bill seem unrealistic or impossible without the appropriate level of staffing. Let's take some examples. Exercise and work programs for rehabilitation or reintegration are, in principle, sound. That's in section 78(1). No one has an objection to that, in principle, but institutions do not have enough staff to make such programs possible everywhere. As I've said before, minor tinkering isn't going to solve the problem.

Stakeholders would prefer prisoners' mail to be screened and read as a matter of routine, but the act suggests that this practice would only occur under certain circumstances. That's in section 104(2). The same principle should probably apply to telephone conversations and their duration, also in section 104(10). In the same vein, the powers of inspection in section 119(1) are unnecessarily broad. They appear to remove the few protections that workers have.

I have had discussions with the correctional officers in these detention centres. I remember standing and observing inmates in a particular area being observed, and I noticed that one of them went up to the phone and they were making a phone call. I said to the correctional officer, "Do you know what's going on in that phone call?" "Well, no, we really don't know what's going on in that phone call." It could very well be that that individual, regardless of their background, is probably doing

business on the taxpayer dime, making phone calls, making connections. I said, "That's not right." They are in for a reason and I want to know who they are talking to, what they are talking about. It's not an invasion of privacy. I say, "Give your head a shake"—not you, Mr. Speaker, but people need to give their head a shake, because I think we need to know what's going on within our detention centres.

Again, if I were feeling especially cynical, I would say that this government has decided that the needs and wants of incarcerated criminals are more important than the rights of correctional officers, and that the order and safety of our detention centres are secondary to making criminals feel comfortable. Obviously, the legislation must be compliant with the written portion of our constitution and our common-law traditions, but it must be said that correction officers and all prison staff have rights too.

Mr. Speaker, let me sum up. Ontario's crisis in corrections has reached an inflection point. There are staff shortages and overcrowding. Damaged facilities and understaffed nursing stations are now commonplace in Ontario. Speaking of nurses, by the way, I recall that on a tour of one of the facilities—Maplehurst, as a matter of fact—I was talking with one of the correctional officers, and then talking with some of the nurses who were actually making their calls. They are fearful as well. Granted, they will have a correctional officer beside them, but their responsibilities are huge: ensuring that proper medication is distributed to the right inmate; secondly, on a timely basis; and thirdly, that they in fact take their prescriptions. They can't leave until they know for sure that that particular medication has been ingested by the inmate.

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The other thing I'm concerned about is needles. If an inmate is suffering from an illness, they could actually grab that needle and use it on the nurse. It's a very hazardous profession. We have to remember who we are dealing with, as well.

Earlier, I mentioned staff shortages and overcrowding. I talked about damaged facilities. Understaffed nursing stations are now commonplace in Ontario. My colleagues in the opposition and in the third party have been pointing this out for years.

Now, mere days from a writ period, 10 days from today—oh, yes, that date is June 7—with an election looming, the Liberals want us to believe that they are experiencing a deathbed conversion with this bill. Not only that, they have rushed this bill through committee and Parliament. I mentioned earlier that just last Thursday there were 115 amendments brought through, and pretty much all but probably two were approved by this government. By the way, those were, in fact, government amendments. They piled on 115 cosmetic amendments, which will not solve the crisis in corrections at all. I just don't buy it. I don't buy it at all. Something tells me that the Premier lacks the sincerity of Oscar Wilde or Constantine the Great, who actually converted on their

deathbeds. This piece of legislation and the absurd 10-year timeline for implementation just isn't going to cut it at all.

I've toured the detention centres. I've conducted what I call blue-ribbon stakeholder meetings, talking to the people who are actually doing the job—it's not just the correctional officers, probation and parole officers, bailiffs and nurses; it's everyone who is involved in correction facilities throughout the province of Ontario.

Granted, I realize that some of the facilities—for example, adjacent to my riding, in Windsor, is the South West Detention Centre. It's supposed to be state of the art. I've also looked at Toronto South Detention Centre, a big expenditure by this government. Unfortunately, I have to say, though, my contacts there tell me that it's not state of the art. They've had all kinds of problems: people getting stuck in elevators, power failures where suddenly all the cells open up.

We have a crisis in corrections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Let me start off by thanking Chris and Christine and Ryan from Windsor and Chatham for being here and staying awake this afternoon. We're talking about your livelihoods and the changes that need to be made to make your lives safer.

Mr. Bill Walker: In a nice way.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes, in a nice way. We are behaving ourselves this afternoon, for the most part.

I hope it's not seen as facetious, but I wanted to thank the Liberals for putting in here the need for libraries in our correctional system. I say that because I know the leader of the Conservative Party, when he was a city councillor, wanted to close libraries. He didn't know who Margaret Atwood was. He wouldn't know her if he passed her on the street. Gosh. It's a good thing she didn't live in the greenbelt because he would have sold chunks of that and maybe part of her home to build new homes. So libraries will be there. I've had my fun with that.

I did listen very closely to my good friend from Chatham-Kent-Essex—soon to be Leamington. He did talk about the crisis in corrections, a broken system, a system in crisis with severe staff shortage—you know, probation, parole, corrections. That leads to a serious issue on health and safety, especially the safety of the men and women who have to deal daily one-on-one with the inmates or those on parole. It's not an easy job, Speaker. I'll be the first to admit that. I've never doubted for a moment that it isn't an easy job.

I think also what we have to take into account—I think I read somewhere that at any given moment—was it 8,000 men and women behind bars and another 70,000 on parole within the community under some form of supervision? I don't know if that's the accurate number, whether there are 8,000 or 80,000 behind bars and 70,000 in the community. But what concerns me about the numbers and what we've seen for 15 years from the Liberal government is the lack of funding on the mental

health file. I know money has been put in, but I'm saying that over the 15 years, not enough money has been put in.

I've talked about Maryvale in Windsor a number of times in this House. This is a facility that deals with troubled children and youth with mental health issues. For the past 15 years, they have not had one cent of an increase in their base funding, so they go out into the community and they raise funds. These are hundreds of kids who are treated there, and there are long, long wait times to get the kids fixed.

I only use that as an example because if we don't handle a problem child with a mental health issue at a young age, that problem is going to get exacerbated. That child is going to turn into a teenager with mental health issues, a young adult with mental health issues, and chances are that that child, now a young adult, will be having encounters with police, will eventually be sentenced and incarcerated, perhaps eventually on parole, but a problem for the entire system because of a lack of funding on the mental health file to deal with children and young people with mental health issues.

If we could only do more. If somebody would have had the vision 15 years ago in the Liberal party to say, "You know, if you look down the road, this is going to really become a huge problem, and then we'll have to deal with it."

It's the same with problems with, if you will, Speaker, dementia. If somebody 15 years ago would have looked down the road and said, "There's a tsunami coming at us. The baby boomers are aging out. We're going to have a problem with dementia because it keeps getting worse and worse every year."

It's the same with the long-term-care homes and the lack of beds, the shortage of hospital beds, and the number of people in hospital beds who should be in long-term-care homes. There was no vision there. There was a vision for other things, but for the past 15 years, not enough attention was given to some of the files that are now falling on our laps.

Some of the bills—the legislation put forward in the last month or so—are some kind of an attempt to convince the most gullible that the Liberal government has been there, working hard for you, for 15 years. I'm not saying individual members didn't work hard and aren't working hard. I'm not saying that; I'm saying that as a group, as a whole, as a government, the vision has not been there to look after the worst files, the files that needed the most attention, the files that needed the most money.

We have encountered now, on a number of issues, a number of files in crisis. We're in crisis on so many different things, and we're on the eve of an election. I believe next Tuesday may very well be our last day in this House.

Mr. James J. Bradley: You were more objective when you were a CBC reporter.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you. Have you been nominated yet? I was just looking. I don't even think you're nominated yet.

Speaker, can you use the good graces of your office to ask the member from St. Catharines if the member, after 40 years, is going to run again?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I don't think that's the role of the Speaker.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): But it is the role of the Speaker to point out that it's 6'clock, and this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism / Ministre délégué à l'Action contre le racisme
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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (IND)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Minister Responsible for Small Business / Ministre responsable des Petites Entreprises Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (IND)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Hon. / L'hon. Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
		Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care / Ministre responsable de la Petite Enfance et de la Garde d'enfants
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Hon. / L'hon. Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Vacant	Parkdale–High Park	
Vacant	St. Paul's	
Vacant	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Catherine Fife
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Bob Delaney, Catherine Fife
Michael Harris, Monte Kwinter
Michael Mantha, Mario Sergio
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Han Dong
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Mike Colle, Han Dong
Brad Duguid, Ann Hoggarth
Lisa MacLeod, Cristina Martins
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Arthur Potts
Yvan Baker, Grant Crack
Lisa Gretzky, Sophie Kiwala
Sam Oosterhoff, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi, Lisa M. Thompson
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

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Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Lisa MacLeod
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Deborah Matthews, Ted McMeekin
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Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley